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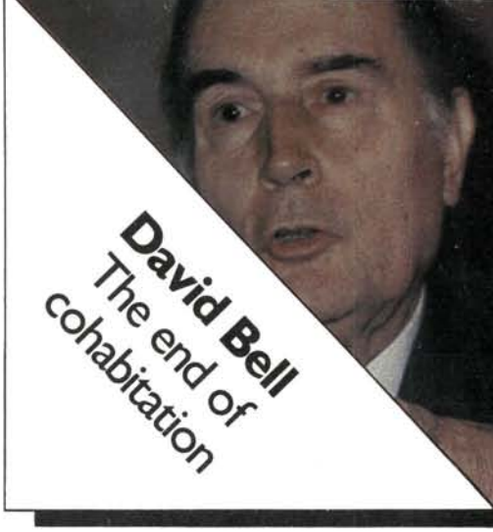
STATESMAN

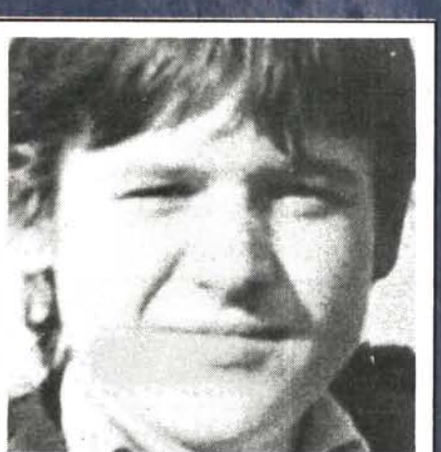
Perdition: What the fuss was about Agnes Heller: entrenching **glasnost**



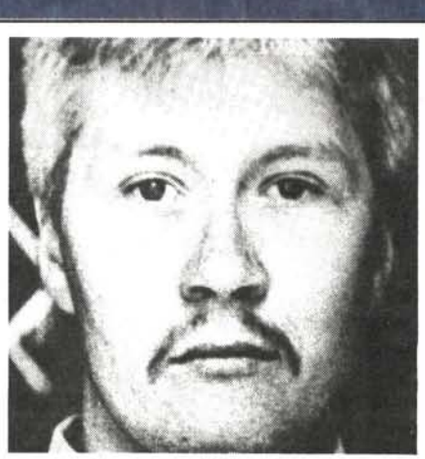
David Bell
The end of cohabitation

DUNCAN CAMPBELL ON **GIBRALTAR**

Why *not* gun down enemies of the state?



Sean Savage



Danny McCann

Mairead Farrell

Cover photo: Telegraph Colour Library. Inset: Pacemaker

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The

LONDON, FRIDAY, APRIL 27, 1888.

BIRTHS.

On the 27th April 1888, at Somerset House, London, to BRITAIN, a new company, to be called ESSO.

On the 22d inst., at Salisbury, the wife of W. H. GATER, Solicitor, of a daughter.

On the 23d April, at Harcourts, Chertsey, the wife of DR. VINEY, of a son.

On the 23d April, the wife of CHARLES EDWARD WILLIAMS Thornbayes, Sleaford, of a son.

On the 23d April, at 5, Sea View-terrace, Donnybrook, Dublin, the wife of CAPTAIN S. E. JAMESON, Seaforth Highlanders, of a son, prematurely.

On Monday, the 23d inst., at Farningham, the wife of W. F. DEVAS, of a son.

On the 23d inst., at The Elms, Maidenhead, the wife of FREDERICK WILLIAM NICHOLSON, of a son.

On the 24th April, at Eaglesham, the wife of ALLAN GILMOUR, Yr., of Eaglesham, of a son.

On the 24th April, at Dunlugas House, Banffshire, the wife of LIEUT.-COLONEL FOSTER FORBES, of a son.

On the 24th inst., at Nunsfield, Alvaston, Derby, the wife of H. F. GADSBY, of a daughter.

On the 24th inst., the wife of CAPTAIN ST. ANDREW WARDE, Royal Artillery, of a daughter.

On the 25th April, at 14, Manchester-square, the wife of RALPH BENSON, of a son.

PERSONAL, &c.

ROYAL COMMISSION on the METROPOLITAN BOARD of WORKS.—The Metropolitan Board of Works Inquiry Committee (appointed at a public meeting held at St. James's Hall on December 22, 1887, having given the Directors of the Company missioners to appear by counsel, now invite all those persons who are in possession of INFORMATION which would assist the inquiry to at once place themselves in COMMUNICATION with the solicitors to the Committee, Messrs. Kaye and Gundalla, of 21, Essex-street, Strand, who have been instructed to render every assistance in collating and preparing evidence for submission to the Royal Commission also.

No. 8, Park-place-villas, W. MARK H. JUDGE, Chairman.

IN the HIGH COURT of JUSTICE. Probate, Divorce and Admiralty Division. Probate. In the NEXT OF KIN if any in special and all others interested in the personal Estate of CHRISTI ANNETTE HAYWARD late of St. Andrew's Hospital Northampton in the County of Northampton deceased. Take Notice that a CITATION has issued citing you to cause an appearance to be entered for you within thirty days after service by publication hereof in the Principal Probate Registry of the Court situate at Somerset House Strand Middlesex and accept or refuse letters of administration of the personal Estate of the said Christi Annette Hayward late of Saint Andrews Hospital aforesaid Widow deceased or show cause why the same should not be granted to Holroyd Chaplin as a Creditor of the said deceased with an intimation that in default of your appearance the said letters of administration will be granted to the said Holroyd Chaplin

CHAS. J. MIDDLETON Registrar.

VALPY CHAPLIN & [illegible] 15 Lincoln's Inn Fields Solicitors.

PURSUANT to an order of the Court of Chancery of the County Palatine of Lancaster, Manchester District, in an action of Heap v. The Manchester, [illegible] Steam Tramways Company, 1887. Letter H. No. [illegible] of MORTGAGE DEBENTURES issued by the [illegible] are requested on or before the 22nd day of May, 1888, to SEND NAMES and ADDRESSES in full, and the amount claimed as such Debenture holders for principal and interest, together with particulars and dates of the Debentures held by them, the addresses of their Solicitors, if any, to Andrew [illegible] Receivers and Managers appointed by the Court of the Trafford Park Tramway Depot, Manchester, or to them at the Tramway Depot, or at the Chambers of the [illegible]

(late of 476, Holloway-RT, aged 46 years, deeply

South Norwood-hill, S.E., in her 67th year.

ington, MARY AMELIA, FRETWELL.

ark-villas, Shepherd's-bush- 84; late of Manor House, apers, please copy.

east-hill, WILLIAM BACHE uer and Audit Department, ited.

kobe, U.S.A., MARGARET HARD EDWARD CARDIN, ged 69.

t, Piccadilly, JOSEPH JULIUS by his numerous friends. The Cemetery on Monday next.

date, Derby, ANNE, the wife of E, aged 75.

n, ANNICA HILDA VERE, only RD, aged two years.

brook, DANIEL SMART, [illegible]

We've been making news ever since.

Lawrence of Arabia is born this year, Marconi still at school. Robert Browning, though, has only one more year to live. The Fall of Khartoum and the death of Gordon are still vivid, but it will be another eight years before Kitchener's victory in the Sudan.

In Britain, Victoria is in her 51st year as Sovereign, and income tax is lowered a penny to 6d. Gilbert and Sullivan are in full swing. So is W. G. Grace.

Bicycling is increasingly popular too, and Dunlop invents the pneumatic tyre. Lord Kelvin and Messrs Edison, Lister and Bell are also pioneering, but the future of the horse for road transport looks shaky. The electric tram is making inroads.

More significantly, Priestman in Hull have developed the first 4-stroke oil engine, forerunner of the modern petrol engine. Petrol is a derivative of paraffin, or lamp oil. And in Britain in this year 1888, a new company is formed to introduce mineral lamp oil to millions, the first widely available cheap source of light this country has ever known.

Now, one hundred years on, you know that company as Esso.

ESSO CENTENARY 1888-1988

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Quality at work for Britain for 100 years.

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NEW STATESMAN

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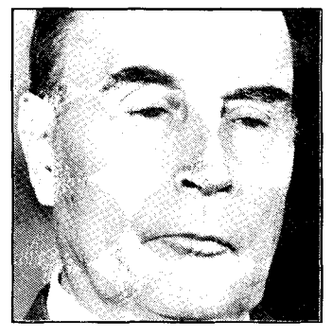
NEXT WEEK

An important change in Labour's non-nuclear policy was signalled this week, as the policy review shudders to the end of its first stage. An *NS* team of star writers reviews the drafts

Breaking the chains



FRANCOIS MITTERRAND's sweeping electoral success is not an historic victory for the left. His was too much of a "safety first" campaign, the new Rocard government's programme will be too consensual for that. It is, however, an historic rout for the French — and the European — right.

Mitterrand's victory, with that of the German SPD in Schleswig-Holstein, and the left successes in Denmark this week, are not gains for the politics of social transformation. But they are gains for human decency in politics. Chirac's desperate scouring of the globe — Lebanon, New Zealand, New Caledonia — for cheap electoral capital has backfired badly on him. So has his, and even more his Interior Minister, the foul Charles Pasqua's wooing of the racist vote. So also, have the dirty tricks of the German CDU revealed in the Barschel affair rebounded to ruin them.

The tides, then, are flowing leftward — even if only back to the centre — over much of Europe. They look ever more likely to do so in North America also, with the revival both of the US Democrats and of the Canadian New Democratic Party. Perhaps most hopefully of all, they are flowing away from the politics of autocracy in the Soviet Union and in Latin America, where the spread of democracy and the rise of a democratic socialist current is one of the most important developments of modern times.

Amidst all these signs of hope, is Britain to be left stranded on an increasingly lonely Thatcherite shore, watching the currents of democratic renewal carry Thatcherism's allies away into oblivion? It is horribly likely that the chains of Britain's archaic constitution, undemocratic governing and electoral structures, philistine, xenophobic political culture, will keep us anchored there, thick-headed with our long post-imperial hangover. Time will hold us grey and dying, though we sing in our chains like . . . like a gutter Press chorusing assent to its own censorship.

Those chains can be broken; though, as we have consistently argued, that will require an unprecedented intellectual opening towards Europe and democratising constitutional reforms unequalled since 1688. More immediately, the present chains of an artificially sustained Conservative majority can be snapped. This, though, will involve British opposition politicians learning some hard and unwelcome lessons from Mitterrand.

In the early 1970s, the French left was electorally feebler, and more internally fractious, than British Labour ever was. Through the decade, Mitterrand seized the opportunities provided by seismic shifts in the French electorate to weld that unpromising force into a relatively unified bloc. The left presented itself as a modernising and democratising force against a tired, patriarchal right.

Despite the failure of their economic policies (and whose could have "succeeded" in those years of recession?) many of the French Socialists' democratic reforms were carried through. Mitterrand has now won massive assent for the consolidation of many of those gains.

In Britain now, as in France before 1981, it is the centre-left which is fragmented and groping for a role. Labour's electoral revival is heartening, but the party is nowhere near sight of being able to form a majority government. As our analysis of the local elections this week shows, the centre, though weakened, has held. Two-and-a-half if not three-party politics will be with us for the foreseeable future, and the areas where the SLD retains a substantial presence are precisely those Labour needs to gain for a parliamentary majority. Meanwhile as the draft reports for Labour's Policy Review pour in, the results are as we predicted some weeks ago: massive shifts in policy on public ownership, defence, consumerism, social services and other spheres. What is being proposed is evidently a bid for centre-ground votes, however much the language used seeks to evade this. The question that must be asked is, bluntly, whether a surer way of capturing that ground would not be an electoral pact with the SLD?

Given the vagaries of our electoral system, this would be a route much more likely to topple the Tories in 1991. Just compare the likely policies of an SLD freed from the Owenite incubus and a post-Review Labour Party? Would a coalition government based on their common features be any less radical than Labour governing alone? In important areas, notably on constitutional reform, the Democrats are in advance of Labour.

Coalition would be felt as a bitter defeat for the left within the Labour Party: but would it really be more than a necessary coming to terms with defeats already suffered? Acknowledging the scale of the retreat which earlier left hopes have undergone, as the French Socialists admitted their failures, may be the first step to reversing it.

With the decks thus cleared, the left could find new spaces in which to move. There may even prove to be *more* space than before. Much of that room for the advance of radical ideas must come outside the formal party structures. Freeing the socialist idea from exclusive fixation on the party — on the one hand, through trans-party campaigning, on the other, through a renewed local and issue-based activism of civil society — might prove a liberating, long-term benefit of such a strategy. In the short run, it offers the best chance of defeating the right, and thus of joining the mainstream of European socialist renewal.

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DIARY

On a train to London last week I was asked by a fellow-passenger if Moral Re-Armament still existed. I said that I thought so — didn't it still own the Westminster Theatre? — but I wasn't at all sure. It seemed ages since anything had been heard of that queer sect.

As if by divine guidance, the very next morning's post brought an envelope from MRA, bulging with glossy material celebrating the movement's 50th anniversary. MRA, a press release suggested, "is probably best known for its role in helping France and Germany find a new relationship after World War II." This I doubt. My guess is that MRA and its predecessor, the Oxford Group, are remembered mainly for the remark made by their founder, Frank Buchman, after his visit to Germany in 1936: "I thank heaven for a man like Adolf Hitler, who built a front-line of defence against the anti-Christ of Communism."

Apart from virulent anti-Communism, MRA's other distinguishing feature — also ignored by the 50th anniversary bumf — is its terror of sex. (MRA disapproves even of sex within marriage.) To avoid masturbation, converts are encouraged to sleep with their hands outside the blankets. As for homosexuality — well, as Buchman himself said, "unless you instantly sniff this danger . . . you may have a collapse in the nation." And how is one to sniff it? The ardent Buchmanite Peter Howard provided some useful hints in his book *Remaking Men*: "There are many who wear suede shoes who are not homosexual, but in Europe and America the majority of homosexuals do. They favour green as a colour in clothes and decoration. Men are given to an excessive display and use of the handkerchief." So now you know.

○

I have seen the future, and its name is Jack Tanner. Scripted by Garry Trudeau, directed by Robert Altman, acted by Michael Murphy, he is (for the benefit of those who missed him) an imaginary candidate for this year's Democratic nomination. He finally reached British television screens late last Friday night, trudging through the snows of New Hampshire and joshing with "real" politicians such as Gary Hart, Bob Dole and Pat Robertson. Disturbingly, he was a much more plausible candidate than any of them: like all great satire he is a fantasy which makes reality itself seem an absurd fiction.

Yet, astonishingly enough, we may never see this brilliant creation again. HBO in the United States has already filmed further instalments of the Tanner odyssey but the British co-producers, Zenith, confirmed to me this week that ITV has not bought them. If Mrs Thatcher is truly concerned about dereliction of duty by television companies, she should stop whingeing about Gibraltar and address herself to the Jack Tanner scandal forthwith.

○

Last year, with surprisingly little publicity, Narendra Sethia joined the Jeffrey Archer league by winning £260,000 in libel damages from *Mail on Sunday*. During the Falklands war Sethia had been an officer on HMS Conqueror, the nuclear submarine which sank the Belgrano. The *Mail* had falsely accused him of stealing the sub's log.

Now I hear that the *Sun*, which repeated the allegation (though with less prominence), has reached a settlement with Sethia. It will pay him £15,000 damages plus all his considerable costs, and will read a grovelling statement of apology in open court in the next couple of weeks. He has another writ outstanding against the *Observer*.

I have a special interest in these cases. I met Sethia when we were both aged about eight, and we were soon staunch comrades. We spent countless happy hours together in the woods, smoking ourselves silly on cheap tobacco. And smoking was his downfall. When he was 14 he broke into a cigarette machine. A policeman spotted him. Sethia rather dashingly then stole a car and was pursued at high speed before being arrested and, alas, expelled. He disappeared without trace. Years later I read extracts from a diary written by a naval officer during the Falklands war. The author turned out to be Narendra Sethia.

○

I wasn't entirely sorry to miss last weekend's fun and games at the LSE to celebrate the 20th anniversary of you-know-what. I'm usually as happy to listen to Jimi Hendrix and Anna Coote as the next person; nevertheless, only four months into the year I already feel the onset of Sixties fatigue, or perhaps just *déjà entendu*. My red-haired colleague Ian Williams mentioned to me the other day, with understandable pride, that he had been arrested in Paris during *les évènements* when a couple of *flics* mistook him for Dany Cohn-Bendit. Last week I was talking to Colin MacCabe, head of production at the British Film Institute. Hadn't he been in Paris for May '68? No, he said, but when he did arrive, later in the summer, he was greeted by both cops and students as — yes — Dany Cohn-Bendit.

○

For some people, establishing their part in That Decade is still desperately important. A couple of weeks ago I was berated by a man who complained that I hadn't mentioned him in my book on the 1960s (published six years ago). Well, I replied jokily, there were a lot of people around at the time and I couldn't fit them *all* in. He was unamused. "You don't understand," he snapped. "I *was* the Sixties." Later I discovered his credentials for this impressive claim: in the late 1960s he presented a television programme called *A Whole Scene Goin' On*. Groovy, eh?

○

Prince Charles came under attack for his architectural views in last Friday's *Daily Mail*. "At the moment," Nigel Dempster wrote, "the Prince is clearly under the influence of Jules Lubbock, critic of the left-wing *New Statesman*, and Lady Wynn-Jones. . ." Could this be so? Jules assures me that he's "never met the Prince of Wales, never spoken to him, never written a speech for him". There is, however, an element of truth in it: HRH is known to be an avid reader of Jules's columns in the *NS*.

But there are plenty of other people who influence the Prince's ideas on architecture just as much. Why pick on Jules Lubbock and Lady Wynn-Jones (who was described by Dempster as "dotty")? The answer is obvious. Only last week the Prince managed to stop a £50 million development of luxury flats. Charles's interest in buildings is no longer to be tolerated as an amusing hobby: property companies are becoming alarmed at its possible effect on their profits. Dempster quoted an unnamed "highly respected property figure" as saying that the Prince knows nothing about architecture — "it's clear that others are briefing him". A classic red scare: the heir to the throne has been got at by the left-wing *New Statesman* in league with rogue eccentrics like Lady Wynn-Jones (whose husband was a Labour politician anyway, QED). I shall watch the progress of this smear campaign with interest.

○

I made two important discoveries in the North of England last week.

The first is that a mile or two outside Giggleswick lies a hamlet called Wham. It is approached by a gated road and, as far as I could see through a hailstorm, it has only one house, whose name is Higher Wham.

The second discovery was in Lancaster Castle. Gazing at the hundreds of heraldic shields representing Lancastrian grandees of the past nine centuries or so, my eye was caught by a coat of arms featuring a particularly severe-looking pair of handcuffs or wrist-irons. What sort of man would choose such a grim emblem? He was, I discovered, Constable of the Castle in 1596. And his name? James Anderton, Esquire.

Francis Wheen

ROGER WODDIS

Hydrophobia

"The standards of the Media have declined to the point of institutionalised hysteria." — Bernard Ingham, the Prime Minister's Press Secretary

The standards of the Media
Have sunk to such hysteria
That decent folk can only do their nuts.
We cannot long endure it,
And the only way to cure it
Would be a well-aimed bullet in the guts.

What they worship is dissension
And "the false gods of invention",
For only that which Ingham says is true.
In other words, they dare to
Take as read the code they swear to
By publishing another point of view.

A sight far worse than scabies
Is St Bernard down with rabies.
To paraphrase that frightful Froggy chap:
"I detest your foul opinion,
But I'll guard till death's dominion
Your sacred right to shut your bloody trap."

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The merged magazine: ideals and ideas

THE FIRST issue of the merged *New Statesman* and *New Society* will be published on 10 June. The new magazine will be both larger and stronger, and much better value for your money. This will be a true merger in which the identities and qualities of both titles will be retained and enhanced.

The magazine will be, as John Freeman once described the *New Statesman*, "a journal of dissent, of scepticism, of inquiry, of nonconformity", which is not afraid to speak the awkward or unpopular truth. It will also retain the *Statesman*'s cosmopolitan spirit. *New Society* will contribute its capacity for expert reporting of social policy, its sociological analysis, and "state of the nation" reportages.

We believe that the two existing magazines, which already complement each other, will together make a more satisfying product. The *Statesman*'s funding statement observed in 1913, "the remedying of the social defects of which we are all so painfully aware depends no doubt primarily upon the existence of a determination to remedy them; but it depends also, and no less emphatically, upon our knowing exactly how to set about it. The development of social science is of equal importance with the development of public spirit."

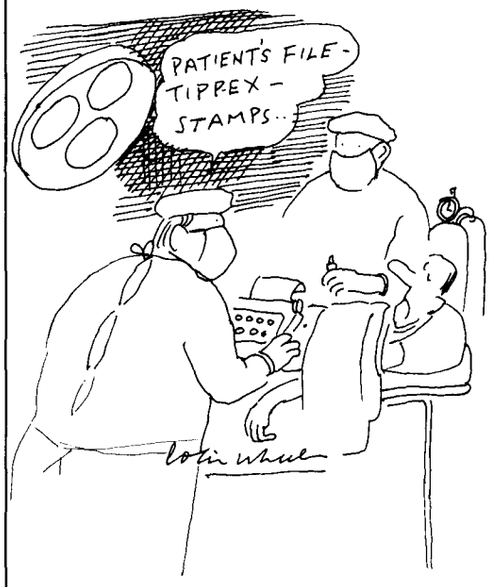
The title of the new magazine will reflect its provenance: not *NS*, as the media incorrectly reported, but *New Statesman and Society*. Its immediate future as an independent magazine of ideals and ideas is being secured by the Rowntree Trust, joint proprietor with The Statesman & Nation Publishing Company, of *New Society*. The basis on which Rowntree is providing funds is being designed specifically to safeguard the new magazine's editorial independence, and the new board will shortly be seeking additional investment. ●

Consultants doubling as secretaries

WAITING IN out-patient clinics to see a doctor is a frustrating business. While some consultants have a case to answer with private patients or rounds of golf taking precedence over NHS clinics, a more widespread reason for the long waits was highlighted by a recent study published in the *British Medical Journal*. A consultant urologist at the Royal Northern Hospital in London was followed for six weeks and was found to spend 45 per cent of his clinic time chasing up patients' notes and the missing results of investigations, jobs that should have been done by administrative staff.

One fundamental problem is poor pay. A NALGO survey of members found 97.5 per cent of clerical and secretarial staff took home under £100 a week. A medical secretary with a two-year diploma in medical terminology and shorthand earns between £5,000 and £7,500 a year. At the Royal Northern Hospital the rates of pay have left nearly 40 per cent of posts vacant.

When budgets allow, positions are filled by agency staff. The hospital pays between £13,000 and £16,000 a year for a medical secretary —



double the cost of a staff post — while the secretary takes home between £9,500 and £12,500 a year. The agencies do very nicely, and many secretaries prefer to work through agencies.

But the hospitals don't like it. There is a vast turnover of expensive staff — one London teaching hospital spends almost £300,000 a year on agency medical secretaries — a lack of continuity and few experienced staff. Several are developing schemes to avoid agencies by running their own internal registers.

And doctors hate it. Consultants waste valuable time searching for essential clinical data before seeing patients. GPs are not sent discharge letters promptly, leaving doctors unaware of the treatment the patient received in hospital. Without this information adequate and appropriate care cannot be prescribed.

Pamela Holmes

Local council 'loony' strike from the right

NOTHING ILLUSTRATES more clearly the selective and partisan nature of press interest in the affairs of London's local authorities than the way in which it has virtually ignored certain recent developments in Haringey. While the onslaught on sex education in the borough's schools and on its policies towards gays and lesbians continues unabated in the Tory press, the fact that 50 local Tories have signed a statement condemning the attitudes of certain of their own local councillors has gone largely unreported.

The signatories include local MP Sir Hugh Rossi and the statement expresses their opposition to "schemes for exploiting the clause (i.e. Section 28) in ways which would hinder the borough from [sic] the proper provision of services to all its inhabitants." This relates to the emergency meeting of the council summoned by a number of Tory councillors on 25 April in order to demand that Haringey "recognise the wisdom of the Local Government Bill", close the lesbian and gay unit, abolish the curriculum working party of teachers and councillors on lesbian and gay issues in education, delete all references to homosexuality in statements of official Council policy, and cease grants to Reading Matters bookshop and "any other homosexual group". In the event none of these proposals was carried, with more moderate Tories lining up behind an amendment which welcomed government statements to the effect that the clause is not intended "to encourage prejudice and discrimination".

Behind this particular incident there lies an embarrassing and deep-rooted split in the ranks of the Haringey Tories. One group espouses a brand of conservatism that owes more to Alf Garnett than Harold Macmillan. It is made up of rabidly anti-gay councillors and revolves around Peter Murphy, until very recently Chairman of Tottenham Conservative Association. It was he who was responsible for drumming up support for the

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emergency Council meeting last month. and who figures ubiquitiously as a source of anti-Labour bile in Haringey-bashing stories in the press.

Murphy, who has never in fact accepted the Tory whip on Haringey council, has long been a vociferous thorn in the side of the official Tory opposition there and has been expelled from council meetings on several occasions. His antics include telling the acting chair of the race equality committee that "your brain comes from the sewer", throwing a cushion across the council chamber at the mayor and then writing to the chief executive that "I am only ashamed that I did not have a better aim at hitting him fair and square in the mouth, which is what he deserved", bursting into a private Labour Party meeting and leaving only when the police had been called, and rounding up local residents at 1a.m. to harass a local councillor at her home about a travellers' site in the borough.

Although Murphy certainly has his supporters among Tottenham Tories he has his enemies too, who accuse him of riding roughshod over the Association during the past five years. Things reached a head recently when 30 members complained to Conservative Central Office about the way in which Tottenham was being run. The Association's first AGM in three years followed, from which the press were excluded (forcefully, in at least one case), as were several people whom Murphy alleged were not paid-up party members. This time Murphy stood as agent and was elected in the absence of other nominations.

Meanwhile, other troubles are brewing for Murphy. He is the director of at least 30 companies, many of them property firms with substantial interests in the borough. Before being elected to the Council in 1986, Murphy set up a Right-to-Buy club for council tenants wanting to buy their homes. Those wishing to join the club have to pay a £10 fee which brings them an information pack on how to set about buying their council property. In his incarnation as a local councillor Murphy was for a year a member of the housing committee where he repeatedly asked for information and statistics about council house sales in general and for specific details on individual properties. Not only the National Code of Local Government conduct, but also the law, requires councillors to disclose any direct or indirect pecuniary interest in matters which come before the council. Murphy has not declared his club in the register of members' interests provided for this purpose. Murphy claims the registration fee for the club which he runs from the Tottenham Conservative Association office does no more than cover his administration costs.

It might also interest the Registrar of Companies to know that until recently three of Murphy's companies had failed to file their accounts within the 10-month period laid down by the Companies Act, an offence which carries a maximum fine of £2,000.

Such is the life of a hero of the Tory press. Now, imagine he was a *Labour* councillor. . .

Julian Petley

NEW STATESMAN INDEX

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The last days of Empire

CHINESE GOVERNMENT big guns visit London this week to broach the slippery subject of Hong Kong's future as the capitalist emporium of the East. Relations with Mrs Thatcher and her government are increasingly cosy as Britain's hand-over in 1997 approaches. So the leader of the delegation, the Vice-Chairman of the National People's Congress, Mr Rong Yiren, is devoting much of his time to big banks and businesses — including some with major financial interests in Hong Kong and with much to gain from China's rediscovered love of money.

The Chinese now openly recognise money as the bedrock of Hong Kong and Hong Kong as their stepping stone to the world's markets. Chinese government sources there express eagerness for the cut and thrust of internationally competitive economics and hope Hong Kong will help release China from the ties of a post-feudalist economy. They rarely talk of communism anymore, but instead of "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" — i.e. clever, pragmatic and enterprising. They say China must protect Hong Kong's big businesses; she cannot please everybody and the population as a whole stands to gain more from a coherent policy of placating the millionaires than one of doing deals with the middle-class pro-democracy lobby.

Mrs Thatcher would doubtless agree. The British administration has been slow to improve Hong Kong's stagnant and undemocractic political system during the last days of the Empire. It seems unlikely she will start worrying the Chinese about universal suffrage now. But, with the press linking Hong Kong and Tibet, pressure is mounting on the British government to show that it has not already abandoned the colony's ordinary people to an unholy alliance of "rabid capitalists" and "Chinese communists".

The latest row has been sparked by the first draft of "The Basic Law" — China's constitution for Hong Kong post 1997 — published two weeks ago. Its critics accuse Britain of kowtowing to China. They argue that the law contravenes the joint declaration by Britain and China on the transfer of power signed in 1984. The dispute focuses on China's power under the Law to amend it. British administrators in Hong Kong say it would be surprising if more than delicate technical changes were necessary.

So what changes will they be pushing for? Surprisingly it seems they may be about to challenge the section on economic policy which states that the future government will balance its budgets and keep taxes low. It may sound like the stuff of Thatcherite dreams, but government sources in Hong Kong argue that it is economically unsound, too restrictive and an infringement on the "high degree of autonomy" China has promised.

Many of the banks and businesses the Chinese will be consulting over the coming months say they are impressed with the Law in broad outline — the balanced budget requirement is not viewed as politically significant. But, as many of them were involved in drafting it, they should be happy. Some will be lobbying for changes, particularly over China's powers to amend it. If they fail, they won't abandon ship immediately with so many treasures on board, but long-term investment in Hong Kong will undoubtedly decline.

So "Socialism with Chinese Characteristics" has been brought to London for marketing this week. It looks as though Cathay Pacific, Rolls Royce and others will buy a stake in its future. With a powerful salesman like Mr Rong Yiren on their doorsteps, they'll find it hard to say no. He is a man with excellent qualifications to express the new China. His job as one of the leading politicians combines with a directorship of the Bank of China. And it's said that before 1949 he was a very successful "industrialist" — which translated in "Socialism with Chinese Characters" means "capitalist".

Lucy Hetherington

Lucy Hetherington is a researcher on Channel 4's "A Week in Politics".

If the caption fits

No 67

We bring you Prince Charles and his well-massaged polo manager for the penultimate caption comp. Yes, you have only *two more weeks* to win that prize of all prizes, a £10-pound book token. So let rip and finish the series off with a bang! Any letters of complaint *to the editor*, please; any entries to the above to the cap comp as usual, on a post card, by Monday 23 May.

No 65: Winner

Commuter: "Hmm, an amusing bouquet, probably Right Guard, 1988, from the south side of the factory. . ."
(Nick Thomas, Bournemouth.)

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Poland: eight wasted years

WHILE THE POLAND of the Bydgoszcz bus drivers, the Nowa Huta steel-workers and the Gdansk ship builders was on strike, the other Poland in the party head office must have been wondering what went wrong. After all, the current round of price increases — the immediate cause of the trouble — was carefully prepared. There was even a national referendum on the issue held last November, the first since 1946, when the people were asked to choose between speedy or less speedy reform; in one case food prices would rise by 110 per cent while in the other the increase would be lower.

The vote went in favour of the "gentler" 40 per cent price hikes which were introduced without much upset on 1 February. Coal and energy prices were also increased by substantial amounts in a desperate drive to stem the flow of state spending on subsidies.

The workers were promised full compensation for the latest round of price increases. Ministers repeated on many occasions that they did not intend to "drain" the population's spending power but simply to "restructure" an ineffective and waste-generating price system. Not many people had faith in the theory. Once the big price increases got under way Polish workers tried to stay one jump ahead.

Strikes that began in Bydgoszcz moved to the giant Nowa Huta steelworks then briefly visited the Stalowa Wola foundry before descending on the Lenin shipyard in Gdansk. At Nowa Huta 15,000 striking workers were quick to reject promises of a 50 per cent pay increase. After ten days the government lost patience and used force to settle the dispute. This should worry the reform chief, Zdzislaw Sadowski. An economic reform that relies heavily on the cooperation of the police for its implementation is likely to bring less than spectacular results.

The authorities should be worried by the strong similarities between Poland in 1988 and Poland in 1980. Then, as now, food prices were the immediate cause of unrest. Then, as now, the argument was about "restructuring"; the need to reduce subsidies by raising prices. Then, as now, the Party line opposed U-turns. Then, as now, the Party leaders insisted, "higher wages can come only from higher productivity".

If anything, frustrations are running higher today precisely because it is plain that what separates 1988 from 1980 is eight wasted years. Those frustrations are the direct result of the failure of the Jaruzelski regime to make the sort of impact on living standards that it promised it could deliver. Shortly after martial law there was some improvement but the recovery was short-lived. Last year, for the first time since 1982, real wages fell. Most consumer durables are unobtainable (without hard currency) and meat or petrol are available to most people only by ration coupon.

The current unrest could hardly have come at a worse time for the government. Its attempts to persuade Western creditors that all is normal in Poland will look more desperate. The government's drive to push Poland as an attractive base for joint-ventures with capitalist firms (legislation is about to go to parliament) will take a serious, if not fatal knock. Perhaps Mrs Thatcher will also be doubting the wisdom of accepting an invitation to visit the country in 1988?

A show of force may put a stop to the immediate unrest but much more will be needed to tackle the underlying economic crisis. The party favours giving the reform minister special powers to impose an incomes policy, to fire directors and bankrupt the most inefficient firms. Workers will lose the right to strike.

But all of this sounds like the traditional reform from above, on behalf of the people rather than by the people, when what is needed is a convincing shift to a new style of economic management and political participation.

The police action in Nowa Huta showed just how far Poland is from such change and highlights, at the same time, the short distance travelled since 13 December 1981 when martial law was declared.

George Blazyca

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No hash brownies: now it's carob cake

SEVERAL MILES north of the LSE students are occupying Middlesex Polytechnic, protesting against the plans to shift humanities from the heart of further education. If this had been 1968 there would undoubtedly have been solidarity visits between the students in struggle at the poly and the lefties in debate at the university. But it isn't and there weren't. There were no calls for support for students or seafarers in struggle. *Marxism Today*'s "The '68 Show" (what's in a name?) brought us a left whose roots in political action have atrophied. Dug up, they made a nice display.

LSE late 1980s style is very different. No hash brownies but a café selling carob cake and tofu quiche, yin and yang for a quiet life. Inside, in place of a sea of tousled hair there were shorn and bald-smooth heads ranked neatly beside tufts of bleached or greying hair. David Triesman, looking chunkily more like the semi-pro footballer he was and pretended not to be in 1968, had an explanation for the length of men's hair then. The pill cut out the need to visit the barber every Friday, a man's route to sex via a discreet packet of johnnies. As they were called in those days.

Today they are called condoms and euphemism is no longer the language of sex. Is it? The speakers last Saturday were remarkably coy about one of the driving impulses of the great rebellion they had come to describe, analyse and honour. Anna Coote remembered that Malcolm Muggeridge had flamboyantly resigned as Rector of her university on the issue of pot and the pill, but overall the sexual drive and confrontation of those days was not invoked.

Yet the session on "The Personal as Political" drew the largest audience of the day; the crammed room steamed with body heat. It was one of the few sessions in which the culture of our times took precedence over retrospect not least because, as Jeffrey Weeks said, the years after 1968 have proved "far more personally fulfilling". It was only after the '68 urges for lashings of copulation and confrontation burned out that, like 1913, the voices for women's and gay liberation could speak. 1968 was just a conventional year for many. Beatrix Campbell told her audience that she got married then. Next door Inez McCormack was revealing the same thing; but her wedding presents had been blown up by a Loyalist bomb.

So has this all just been an excuse for yesterday's left to display their old war-medals — or did the world rock and roll 20 years ago? Speakers on Vietnam, Czechoslovakia, USA civil rights, *glasnost*, could talk of a sustained political struggle today; speakers on Britain, reclothed in a deadly insularity, had to look to the past. And should the British left feel responsible for the insularity and reaction that has set in? It was not a day of angst and accusation. Stuart Hall and Ernesto Laclau offered the authoritative interpretations. They agreed on one of them; politics is not a blind follower of economics but is there at all points of social conflict. Unlike 1968, "The '68 show" had no conflict. Old enemies were forgiven in the need not to forget a time when revolution was taken seriously and no one serious ate carob cake.

Sarah Benton

POLITICAL SKETCH

Fireships and floating coffins

Edward Pearce

OCCASIONALLY it seems useful to *desist*, as Frankie Howerd would say, from the sketch direct and substitute a few grim musings on events outside the chamber. It never seemed more pressing to do so than during the committee stage of the Finance Bill. There is something about an empty chamber and empty gallery which inspires confidence in the legislative process.

Not more useful, but probably more interesting, is the thought that one of Monday's participants, the proximate and ineffectual don, Alan Beith, is a contender of feeble sorts for a job which should be going out to tender within the shortest conceivable time — the leadership of the SLD.

Thursday's local elections may have settled little between the bigger parties (see analysis on page 17). The Tories are actually down in seats if you take account of all those Independents who are so for strategic reasons, who should be taken as Conservatives (this is not true of all Independents) and whose tally of losses contains a quota of Tory heads. Labour should be pleased, if modestly, though everything which has ever been said about regional variation appears to apply with special force in Derbyshire. However, having said that and having added that the baseline of 1984 was not quite the airstrip on the south coll of Everest that Dr Cunningham would cheerfully like us to believe, Labour nevertheless did very respectably.

> *'Ashdown is not precisely an intellectual but I would be reluctant to speak patronisingly of a man with a First in Chinese'*

The fun, if that is quite the word, was reserved for the centre parties. It is very hard after Thursday night to look at Dr Owen without a certain empathy for Evans the Death in *Under Milk Wood* who went around measuring people for their coffins. Beautiful the Doctor may be, beloved of Mrs Thatcher he appears from Brian Walden's interview to be, but I think we can say that six foot four inches of high grain yew with silver handles will answer all his political needs. To go down in face-to-face encounters with the merged SLD was predictable, to go down four-to-one on average looks like devastation.

Now the roots of the SDP's rump existence lie in a private capacity for conflict which David Owen's rage and pride and David Steel's impulse to meddle brought to scalding point. The impulse among modestly placed men pitching for moderate opinion to cut one another's tripes is disconcerting. The amount of savage animus split across a mothwing-thin spectrum of opinion was frightening.

But the feeling grows that while David Owen may be gone to his long home, David Steel, alighting with sweet symmetry as his great achievement, legal abortion, is entrenched 20 years after the event, will be making his own farewells to a leadership which after twelve years is proving burdensome.

THAT brings us back to elections, about which it isn't possible to get excited. Bob Maclennan is out of it, Charles Kennedy is too young, Alan Beith is boring at the inter-galactic level, Malcolm Bruce has the panache and zizzbang of cottage cheese. Paddy Ashdown it has to be, in spite of all the people who can't stand him. He has the virtue that in Westminster, where the SLD do not generally distinguish or exert themselves, he is a sedulous, busy presence.

On the Education Committee he may not have understood everything, but he managed to annoy Kenneth Baker, which is part of the job, and he impressed some Labour onlookers more than the non-sparking Jack Straw who, against all expectations, appears to be the big exception to Labour's tentative front bench renaissance.

Ashdown is different, at least in temperament, from Steel. He almost certainly lacks the patient, long-headed astuteness of the present leader. But he has presence, while Steel addressed the House like a dishcloth obeying the laws of gravity. Also he has physical strength — all that deplorable jogging and rock-climbing. He will not be somnambulating on the arm of Lord Chitnis as he goes lethargically through the motions from whistle stop to whistle stop through the west of England. He will not make a perfuctory hanged-in-irons ten-minute speech to his own constituents as Steel did in 1987 because the election had beaten him to the ground.

Ashdown is not precisely an intellectual, though I would be reluctant to speak patronisingly of a man with a First in Chinese. But he works, he runs and he smiles, not contemptible attributes for the leadership of a nice party trailing by a hundred yards.

The point is, of course, that is trailing by less than most of us expected. If the Owen longboat has sunk under the first wave, the battered trawler of the merged party actually came out of Thursday night in very fair shape. To lose 60 seats is not heroic, but few people can have expected to have lost so few after the worst twelve months in the history of centrist politics since Jeremy Thrope had a brush with the law. Very roughly the Democrats command a fifth of the vote. The novelty of a vigorous new leader should edge that up. Is it enough to stop Labour for good? Or should we see it has a mechanism for winning seats from Brian's Girl in the southern half of England? In this, David Steel, Paddy Ashdown and good sense do not conflict. The valid future of an opposition party is to oppose the government as and where it is best placed to do so.

Labour, in its more sectarian moments, may not like this, but if the SLD can survive the orgy of plate throwing and common assault which has distinguished the last year it can survive anything. Anything that is, except the return of Dr Owen with a humble and a contrite heart. All efforts must now be made to turn the Doctor towards the Conservatives. The capsized longboat has great potential as a fireship.

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PAUL HIRST

Reagan's look to the stars signals the defeat of reason

THE PAST WEEK did not lack the materials for a political column. It was full of events and issues, each of which gave ample scope for controversy and comment — Mitterrand's re-election, the ebb and flow of the seamen's strike, the murders of British servicemen in Holland by the IRA, the continuing tussle between the government and the television companies over the Gibraltar shootings, the talking out of the Alton Bill and the strikes in Poland. But a non-event overshadowed all the week's political events, the revelation as part of the advance publicity for Donald Regan's book that Ronald Reagan is dependent on astrology in making decisions. The quality press treated this as a humorous sideline, the bantering tone of most reports being apparently suitable for the last months of office of an increasingly ludicrous old man. But, far from being amusing, Ronald and Nancy Reagan's infatuation with astrology is chilling (see Alexander Cockburn, p24).

A cynic might say that astrology cannot be worse than Reagan's unaided mental powers. A man who openly entertains the possibility of invasion from outer space, who believes in primitive apocalyptic visions of the Last Judgment, and who conceives the Strategic Defence Initiative in the simple Hollywood images of Star Wars is simply not funny. Ronald Reagan's mental world is nothing less than horrifying. Remember that he is Commander in Chief with the power to kill us all, and that he might still be tested with a decision as to whether or not to use it. Reagan is not an exception. His mind is horrifying because it is all too typical of the mental furniture of many rich, successful, well-educated and middle-class Americans. Astrology, fundamentalist Christianity, thinking in simple images about complex problems, and the whole gamut of occult absurdity from reincarnation to bodily auras are not confined to the traditionally "superstitious", the old, poor and the ill-educated. They are not hangovers from primitive beliefs, but are actively promoted new or revived cults, often led by entrepreneurs with intelligence and organisational skill. Credulity is peddled by the shrewd innovator and often to people with university degrees.

The United States has the largest system of further and higher education in the world; 40 per cent of the relevant age groups go to college. It sets a high value on education and people are willing to make big financial sacrifices to get their kids to college. Yet in 1974, 48 per cent of an American survey sample believed in a personal Devil and 20 per cent more considered its existence possible. Belief in astrology is widespread, as is that in visits by beings from outer space. Too many of the educated believe in things usually ascribed to the ignorant. Allan Bloom's *The Closing of the American Mind* faces this issue squarely. He argues that American universities are failing to turn out the liberally-educated elite necessary to a democracy in the advanced industrial world. The specialism and vocationalism of the elite schools in natural science, medicine, law and economics are producing students without the capacity to reason independently about public affairs and without a vision of a common good to guide their reasoning.

The threat posed to the culture of public debate in a democracy was traditionally seen to be the ignorance of the masses. The United States has mass higher education, but a declining capacity to focus public debate on what matters. Cultural pluralism, highly organised sectional interests, and the reduction by the mass media of political issues to simple images and personalities all combine to produce a highly fragmented political culture — one where the only common currency is hollow rhetoric and simple symbols. Ronald Reagan is symptomatic of this reduction of political culture to banal and yet powerful symbolism. In Reagan's world politics is divided between light and dark, good and evil. His relentless pursuit of Nicaragua appears absurd, until one realises he sees it as a symbol of evil. Evil has a boundless power to corrupt and deprave, it must be extirpated and unendingly persecuted. Reagan's mind is like that of a 16th-century demonologist.

THEODOR ADORNO called the occult "the metaphysics of dopes". In line with the pessimistic neo-Marxist cultural criticism of the Frankfurt School he saw late capitalism as a society that had closed off all genuine alternatives. Modern America was the acme of late capitalist mass culture. The occult offered an easy comprehension through simply imagined miraculous forces of a social world increasingly opaque and mystifying to its inhabitants and victims. In an uncertain world where real causes are obscure, astrology offers a universal determinism, it is easy to consult and provides the illusion of certainty in guiding personal conduct.

> *Astrology is pernicious because it treats human affairs as if they were determined by non-human causes. It provides a decision-making procedure that removes personal responsibility for conduct*

But it is not just the "little people" who use astrology, it is leaders too. Many of the people who endorse and use astrology are not "dopes" in the conventional sense of simple, ill-educated people who lack the intellectual resources to understand the world in more complex ways. America is not just the most advanced exemplar of capitalist mass culture, but a very specific society in which archaic and occult ideas have greater influence than almost anywhere else in the modern world. The occult is influential in part because religious belief on which it is parasitic is so influential. America still has very high rates of church attendance and religious belief. God is an unchallengeable part of political rhetoric too. America's political system is founded on a belief in God as benevolent Creator. Reagan's primitive religious certainties are matched by the very different but no less certain beliefs of Jesse Jackson, and both men carry these certainties over into politics. A thoroughgoing scepticism is inhibited by the need in public to obey certain pieties; to deny that it is "in God we trust" would be political suicide. Moreover, it is unquestionable, constitutionally protected dogma that everyone's beliefs are sacrosanct and equal, however flaky. That is the price of cultural pluralism.

CURIOUSLY, astrology has been revived in the 20th century after undergoing a decline at the end of the 17th. Astrology is pernicious because it treats human affairs as if they were determined by non-human causes. It provides a decision-making procedure that removes personal responsibility for conduct; actions are undertaken for reasons that deny the value of considered human choice. Yet astrology has virtually no substantive beliefs about the social and political order built into it. Astrology tells you when to act and what to avoid, but it does not provide an ideological system in itself.

This explains why astrology can be so successfully transplanted from very different historical periods and cultures into others. Imported from Babylon, astrology enjoyed great influence in late antiquity. Christianity was hostile to its fatalism and determinism and it underwent a long period of decline and semi-clandestine influence until it was strongly revived along with many other occult ideas in the Renaissance. It died out in the late 17th century, mainly because of Protestant criticism and because of commonsense objections to the inconsistency of astrologers' predictions.

An idea seen to be absurd in the 17th century, by merchants and tradespeople as much as intellectuals, is now widely current among the credulous successors to those once sceptical people. Astrology carries little cultural baggage and is easy to understand. Ronald Reagan believes in astrology although he purports to be a Protestant Christian. Reagan's Christianity is therefore as credulous and unreflected as his belief in astrology. What makes Reagan and all the contemporary fundamentalists so different from the Founders of the Republic and the common people who made the American Revolution is that for the latter profound belief was coupled with the conviction that the individual should reason in religion to find out the truth. In that sense Reagan is a pagan rather than a Christian, a simple-minded believer in a modern mythological system.

Reagan is funny so long as you see him as a senile ex-Hollywood actor totally out of place and out of his depth. See him as a phenomenon, see his astrology as symptomatic and he ceases to be funny. Political rationality is in very short supply in the most powerful state in the world. □

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'That day freedom dies. . .'

Where even the KGB now fears to tread and the CIA operates under legal restraint, Britain has apparently moved in — to join the thin ranks of pariah states prepared to send hit teams beyond national boundaries to eliminate state enemies.

DUNCAN CAMPBELL *reports*

IN THE HUBBUB which now surrounds the Gibraltar killings, the government has assiduously managed to shift the debate onto the media's role in reporting what happened. Far too little is being said about the central and most serious question: should Britain be one of the few states which sends hit teams abroad to eliminate perceived enemies of the state — and in a way which its government does not, in reality, seek to deny before world opinion?

Government ministers have for weeks been saying privately, "What's all the fuss about? These people were terrorists." But the government is not prepared to be so forthright in public, and unnamed sources have been busy muddying the waters around the deaths of the three IRA members in Gibraltar. But the very decision to send in an SAS team, rather than armed police, to deal with the IRA bombers is direct evidence of an operation coordinated and directed at the highest levels of government; and of the expected outcome.

The decision to send the SAS to Gibraltar belonged to Mrs Thatcher. Any major anti-terrorist operation involving special forces units is coordinated by Cabinet Office security and intelligence staff, working under the Prime Minister's orders. According to official sources, quoted in the *Sunday Telegraph* just a week after the killings, the decision as to rules of engagement "was taken at Downing Street in late February... The Prime Minister [was] given the top secret report of a four-month surveillance operation".

Mrs Thatcher then met members of the ministerial committee supervising the intelligence services, including Foreign Secretary Sir Geoffrey Howe and Defence Secretary George Younger. The instructions given by ministers were equivocally "unequivocal": once the IRA team had entered Gibraltar, they were not to be allowed back into Spain. "They were to be arrested or, if necessary, shot."

But whatever government leaks may suggest about the SAS's alleged rules of engagement for the occasion, and the supposed intent to arrest the IRA bomb team, commonsense and past experience point to a simple and different conclusion.

Gunning down enemies of the state, Gibraltar fashion, using hit teams in plain clothes far from national territory, is far less common practice than is imagined. The two leading contenders in the cold-blooded killing stakes, the KGB and CIA, have all but abandoned such activity over the past 25 years. The main example of a developed state behaving in this way is Israel. Mossad hit teams have been kept at work since the aftermath of the massacre of Israeli athletes at Munich in 1972. Most recently, they gunned down Abu Jihad in Tunis last month. There are also South Africa (whose campaign of murder against ANC figures is not in doubt) and Bulgaria, whose agents murdered Georgi Markov in London ten years ago. It is a short shortlist.

The operations of Mossad demonstrate the hazards to innocents of state counter-terrorism. Attempting to track down a PLO leader in Norway in 1973, an Israeli surveillance team became confused and murdered an innocent Moroccan waiter instead. When, in 1979, Mossad finally killed its intended target, Hassan Salameh, it did so by means of a massive car bomb in Beirut. That bomb killed four innocent passers-by as well as Salameh and his bodyguards.

> *'Was there a strategic error? The planners could have proposed, and Mrs Thatcher sanctioned, that the operation should happen more or less as it did. The government's error lay in an over-optimistic assessment of the extent to which the still small voices of dissent had been removed from the British media'*

'Magna Carta'

Whether or not public opinion in Britain might support a state policy of counter-terrorism, Mrs Thatcher is not yet ready to own up to it. The special kind of rage that the Prime Minister has directed against Amnesty International for launching its inquiry ("utterly disgraceful"), and more recently against Thames TV over the *This Week* programme, is a characteristic personal reaction to public criticism of a policy for which she is herself responsible. Her interview two weeks ago with Japanese NHK television blazed with that rage. She made a typically bold and partially successful attempt to shift the locus of argument about the rule of law from her behaviour to that of television journalists:

> The freedom of peoples depends fundamentally on the rule of law, a fair legal system. . . The Common Law has come right up from Magna Carta, which has come right up through the British courts. . . a court of law is the place where you deal with these matters. If you ever get trial by television or guilt by accusation, that day freedom dies. . .

The Downing Street line was amplified by the Prime Minister's Press Secretary, Bernard Ingham, on Saturday. Ingham attacked "institutionalised hysteria" in the press. But the only hysteria that is presently apparent is that of government itself. Ministers are indeed in something of a panic over the new round of media investigations, and it must be presumed that something went significantly wrong with the Gibraltar operation.

Possibly there was a tactical error and the dead IRA bombers were meant to be taken out with a far greater degree of circumspection than was the case. If that is what went wrong, then one scenario suggested by official sources — that the three IRA bombers would be killed in the middle of the airstrip across which the road from Gibraltar to Spain passes — would clearly have provided the SAS men with greater scope for inventiveness about threatening "hand movements" than may withstand cross-examination given the highly inconvenient presence at the petrol station of so many independent witnesses.

Or was there a strategic error? The planners could have proposed, and Mrs Thatcher sanctioned, that the operation should happen more or less as it did. The government's error then lay in an over-optimistic assessment of the extent to which after Peter Wright, Zircon and the sanitisation at the BBC, the still small voices of dissent had been removed from the British media. But that may have been only a minor error. Until Thames TV weighed in, one of the most staggering features of the Gibraltar killings was that there was no investigative reporting of the case at all. Serious indepth inquiries were not attempted by the national press until Thames re-opened the issue two weeks ago, that is almost eight weeks after the original incident.

The Gibraltar police, in whose support the SAS officially acted, appear to have been no less dilatory in investigating what took place. Rather more energy and urgency was deployed in uncovering material with which to smear *This Week* witness Carmen Proetta. At the inquest, expected to start late in June, much of the visiting British press can, on past form, be expected to be credulous about the government's account of events. Despite Mrs Thatcher and Geoffrey Howe's strident fear of "contaminating" the evidence, details of the government case at the inquest are now emerging in a small torrent.

The most comprehensive statement of the official line for June has appeared in the *Sunday Times*, citing official sources who told its reporters what "the inquest will be told". The IRA three were all challenged and then moved their hands: Savage "seemed to reach for a pocket"; McCann "appeared to reach for his trouser pocket"; and Mairead Farrell's hand "moved towards her large black shoulder bag". To these minutiae are added the observation that the white Renault car that they had left parked at the site of the intended bombing had "an unusual car aerial. . . that could receive VHF signals". (In fact, any car aerial can receive VHF signals and most do; a trip down any British motorway will take you past frequent signs advertising the VHF frequencies of local radio stations.)

Such new distractions and elaborations on the "remote control" bomb theory usefully draw attention away from the real unanswered questions about the conduct of the Gibraltar operation:

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Insets: Camera Press

IDAF

Britain has joined the select few states who gun down their enemies abroad: including the South Africans, murderers of Ruth First (left), the Israelis and the Bulgarians, murderers of Abu Jihad (inset, above) and Georgi Markov (inset, left)

□ Why no attempt was made to cordon off the area around the white Renault as soon as it had been left parked by the terrorists at 1pm — especially if the stores about "suspicious" aeriels are true. (It would have been more likely that a conventional timer was in use and indeed one was found in Spain.) Why, if so, were members of the public in the vicinity left lethally at risk for three hours? The authorities began to cordon off the car at four o'clock — half an hour *after* the IRA three had been shot dead.

□ Why, after this, when the car had been examined and found to contain no radio equipment, no explosives, and no bomb, was no attempt made to correct the story, reported by the entire British press on Monday, 8 March, that the bomb disposal squad in Gibraltar had defused a 400lb bomb found in the car?

□ Why was the third terrorist, Sean Savage, finished off to assure his death by one of the SAS team who, according to witnesses, stood with a foot on his chest, and fired three or four shots into the dying man's body — if the SAS's rules of engagement did indeed only specify "minimum force" and arrests if possible?

The renewed public prominence of SAS operations is a direct consequence of its expansion during the Thatcher years. The retaking of the Iranian embassy — another occasion on which orders were given (*NS*, 8 April 1988) to "take no prisoners" — was the trigger for a massive input of funds and a hike in official status for the special forces warriors. Since then, a new barracks complex has been built specifically for the 22nd SAS Regiment at Hereford, while a short distance away at Pontrilas, an extensive new training area has been constructed. The Pontrilas training area includes an old Trident airliner for rehearsing hijack manoeuvres, as well as a long-range radio relay centre so that troops can report directly to their Hereford operational HQ.

A new emphasis on action rather than observation in the security services generally has followed from increased recruiting from the ranks of the military. Commissioned officers leaving SAS are generally offered a post in SIS, the Secret Intelligence Service, or alternatively (and less usually) with MI5, the Security Service. Many former SAS officers are now occupying posts in British embassies abroad, under diplomatic cover as intelligence officers of SIS.

Action rather than observation was the clear directive in Gibraltar. Had the SAS team allowed the IRA bombers to return to Spain, there is no reason to suppose that they would have evaded arrest; the Spanish police had successfully and secretly kept the bombers under surveillance on several previous occasions. But from the British government point of view, the risk was that they would be taken alive by the Spanish, when what the Prime Minister had signalled was her desire for bodies.

'Shot down like dogs'

Since Attorney General Patrick Mayhew told the House of Commons that in considering prosecutions in the aftermath of the Stalker affair, "I have had to balance one harm to national security against another", it has been plain that new official tolerance would be extended for killing under the protection of "national security". Gibraltar followed surprisingly quickly.

Commendably, the right-wing heavyweights of the press — the *Sunday Telegraph*'s Peregrine Worsthorne and *Daily Telegraph* stablemate Max Hastings — have avoided the mealy-mouthed distractions of "suspicious" hand movements, smears against witness Mrs Proetta, or inspired speculation about "unusual" car aeriels. The *Sunday Telegraph* argued this week that no one would care whether the three IRA bombers were warned to surrender by the SAS before they were "shot down like dogs". This policy might well win public support, but it is also illegal, which is inconvenient.

The answer, Worsthorne argued, was to restore ancient statutes of outlawry. Not merely Victorian Values, but Medieval Morals should be restored to our national system of crime and punishment. (He did not go on to observe that the best recent European precedent for declaring state enemies to be at the mercy of the mob can be found in the actions of ministers of the Third Reich.) Where all the intelligent right-wing editors differ entirely from Mrs Thatcher is that they understand that the rule of law is precisely that and not, as she would like, a personal fiat permitting a dispensation from murder here, a special new law of contempt against journalists there. Throw it aside, and *that* day freedom dies. □

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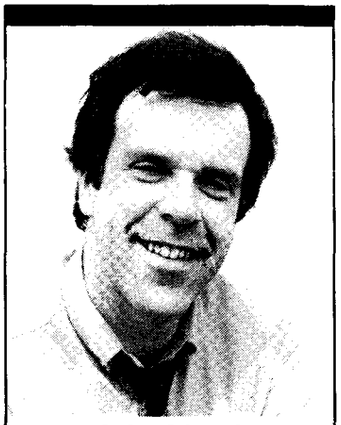

John Lloyd

Time for a left-wing think tank

PRIVATE ENTERPRISE, and the ethic of individualism, continue to hold the high ground and to innovate. A remarkable instance of this was inscribed into the negotiations last weekend on the ferry dispute: Mr James Sherwood, chairman of Sealink ferries — hit by secondary action on the part of the National Union of Seamen — proposed a deal whereby Sealink and the NUS would jointly put the squeeze on P&O: Sealink employing some of the 750 NUS members sacked by P&O, NUS continuing the strike against P&O.

This is not the first time, by any means, that capital and organised labour have attempted to combine to suppress the competition. But it is an index of the now very tight limits of effective union action that the best hope the union had was to *use* the market rather than *stop* it.

Elsewhere, on more elevated planes, a continuing self-confidence is shown. I reported last week, while deputising for Ben Pimlott, that a conference on private sector initiatives showed British senior executives were now anxious to take on a similar kind of social engineering role to that played by many of their colleagues in the United States. The launch of the Radical Society at the end of last month gave Norman Tebbit a platform to pronounce the "brain death of socialism": the Society's aim is to "widen and deepen forward thinking about the enterprise society". As it hangs out its sign, the long-established Institute of Economic Affairs takes another step towards becoming the new orthodoxy by announcing, for hire to schools, colleges and companies, a video series called "The World of Economics", which puts the free market case.

It is not that nothing is happening on the left to offset all this. Labour's performances in the Commons over recent weeks have been good, at times better than good; the Conservatives, and most of all the centre parties, are suffering from it at the polls. Nothing of the third term reforms looks like being other than controversial, perhaps very damaging indeed; and on the back benches, the first acrid whiffs of sweat are evident. The Socialist Philosophers' Group, whose work will be important in establishing a new bedrock for a future government of the left, met for a fruitful seminar at the beginning of this month: a paper to that seminar, by Michael Luntley of University College, Oxford, on "The Good State", shows that clear and rigorous thinking is still in vogue.

But the left has far to go still. Its most public performance was a *Marxism Today* gadabout at the London School of Economics, where a wad of rueful self-indulgence helped cushion the participants against encroaching middle age. The individualism which that period celebrated has been given political expression — not, of course, by the impossibilist politics then proposed. The best which might come out of this year of reminiscence would be a recognition of opportunities squandered, and of the work which has to be done to recoup.

THE MOST VALUABLE element in that would be a centre for policy studies of the left. The right has the proper Centre for Policy Studies; plus the Institute of Economic Affairs, of course, the Adam Smith Institute and others. The left has the Fabian Society, which does not function as a think tank and — though in increasingly good health — cannot without a fundamental change of orientation and much higher income.

The need for a centre has been recognised for some time. The last TUC Congress passed a motion calling for such a body to be set up. The mover of that motion, the Inland Revenue Staff Federation, has remained in the lead on the matter. Word is that further, private funds have been raised and an announcement is likely next month: the development work has been done in Neil Kinnock's office, and it is thus likely at least to start with his agenda.

Few things are more important to opposition politics than that this should work well. Labour has been starved of precise, innovative policy advice throughout the 1980s, consumed for much of that period with the intellectually arid, even absurd, task of seeking to reconcile utopianism and practicalities. It has only recently started on the work of revisionism which has been urgent since the early 1970s; and much of that is timid, because it lacks a background of thought, debate and pointed research.

It is that background which a left think-tank must provide. These are some suggestions as to how it might provide it.

First, it must be small, but not tiny. It should have a core of some five or six policy thinkers full or nearly full-time, ideally with different areas of speciality. They must be that sort of animal which the right has produced in larger quantities lately than the left: able to follow, even to start, academic debate but wholly able to operate in and think for the political world. No utopians need apply.

They should also be able to perform the difficult trick of working hard but being open and sociable. The centre must be open to visiting scholars, politicians, union officers, bureaucrats of all kinds, business executives and, crucially, journalists who get excited about it and write it up or broadcast about it. It should have at least a couple of seminars a week and at least one big conference a month. It should charge as much as it can for everything it can market.

Second, it should have no close links to Labour or any other party; those links it does have should be informal, and crucially should never inhibit it from criticising past or present policy, or proposing new policy.

Third, its scope must be very wide. It must address issues which are not just matters of some importance to Labour but — and there should not be too much difference between the two agendas — to the country as well. Here is a short list:

- ☐ international interdependence and the limits of national sovereignty in economic matters;
- ☐ can you balance trade?
- ☐ the scope for regional policy;
- ☐ how do you intervene (with a long look at other countries)?
- ☐ is tripartism possible in Britain (or are the social partners never going to be up to it)?
- ☐ devolution for Scotland and Wales: how do you do it, and why?
- ☐ the monarchy: can we phase it down and should we try?
- ☐ the Lords — can we replace it with a democratic body?
- ☐ should we disestablish the church?
- ☐ how do we fund the NHS in an ageing society?
- ☐ how *do* you reform benefits?
- ☐ what else do the inner cities need other than money and jobs?
- ☐ how do we cope with single parent families?
- ☐ how can we construct a public schooling system which all want to use?
- ☐ how do we bring the parents into schools?
- ☐ what is our public policy stance on race relations — integrate or separate?
- ☐ how can we get local councils to be efficient?
- ☐ what kind of industrial democracy would work, and would workers want it?
- ☐ what can unions reasonably do?
- ☐ what should be the balance of reform and punishment?
- ☐ what is a good relationship between police and public?

This is not of course exhaustive: I have not mentioned energy, transport or media policy, to name only these. But the list contains issues which stare society in its face — unresolved, or anachronistic, or inequitable, or undemocratic, or inefficient, or increasingly critical. A flow of conferences, papers, pamphlets, books and debate on these and other matters would do wonders for a left which is so far from having answers that it sometimes neglects to ask questions.

Nor does the list indicate areas where no work has been done: on the contrary, in many a great deal of work has been done, and some of it is very good. But for the left, most of it has been born to blush unseen; for no mechanism exists, other than the private reading of MPs, activists and supporters, with which to translate that work into policy proposals. That is one of the main jobs of any "think tank" — not to think, but to know who does.

Its most important task, however, would be to make clear its own strengths and limits. Its strengths are obvious: working well, it could demonstrate new bases for politics, show if and how collective approaches might work, where they no longer can; be uninhibited in the way no bureaucracy could possibly be. Its limits are less obvious to a left over-respectful of the role the CPS and IEA and others played for the Tories: these are that it cannot make politics. It cannot shape insights and ideas into a programme and a working ethic; it cannot muster support for it; it cannot know in the gut what to carry and what to throw out as excess baggage. That is the job only politicians can do. But they need the tools and their delivery has been long, long delayed. ☐

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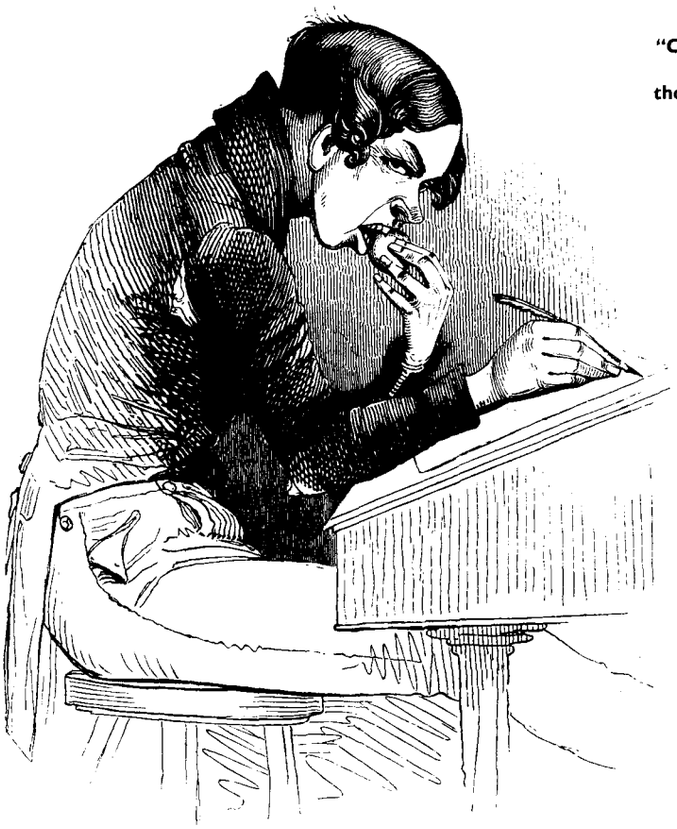
Confessions of an outdoor clerk

PAUL MOSS *"clerked" for a solicitor, and reveals the shabby and cheapskate underside of the trade*



"Clerking": a fine institution for those on the right side of the law

Mary Evans Picture Library

ANYONE who has ever watched a television police series will know that when a person is arrested in Britain, they have the right to telephone their solicitor. They also have the right to ask their solicitor to send somebody to the police station and have that person present at any interview conducted there.

What is not so widely known is that the man or woman who is sent may have absolutely no legal training. He or she is only there as a token representative of the solicitor, and may be of little or no use to the person charged.

I discovered this when I applied for the job of "outdoor clerk" to a major West End firm of criminal solicitors. A friend had mentioned that this "easy job" was going, but had no idea what it involved. It turned out to include responsibilities far beyond anything for which I was suited.

After a two-minute interview with the firm's receptionist, I was given my first assignment: to go to Uxbridge Magistrate's Court and consult with a a client charged with importing one kilogram of cocaine. When I arrived, the client was understandably nervous. The charge carries a maximum penalty of life imprisonment.

First of all, he asked me what the chances were of receiving bail. Without a clue as to the answer, I tried to look thoughtful, and said that in these situations it was always difficult to tell. He then asked me what he should say at this preliminary hearing. Now at a complete loss, I said I had to go to the toilet, and ran for the telephone. When I got through, the solicitor's secretary was the only person who would speak to me. She told me just to stall, and tell the client to say nothing.

Later that morning, the man's application for bail was refused. I was glad not to face him in the cells afterwards.

Two weeks later, I was in a crown court in London representing a client charged with pornography offences. At first sight, the evidence looked damning, but in fact it had serious gaps. Enough was uncertain to call for a verdict of "not guilty".

Halfway through the trial, the client's barrister turned to me and mentioned casually that he really should not have been on the case and had only been given it as a "punishment" by his chambers. He asked whether I could tell him anything about the acts involved; he said he knew very little about obscenity law. Surprised by the openness of his confession, I was more ready to admit my own ignorance on this occasion.

By the time the prosecution's evidence was finished, the case was looking bad for our client. It was at this late stage that the barrister sent me out of the courtroom to "find some witnesses". I asked where to look, and was told to use my common sense.

After a desperate day on the telephone, racking my brains to think of people who could help in the case, I tried to get the solicitors to help, but they merely said that the barrister was at fault for not preparing the case properly, and that now it was up to me.

Eventually, I resorted to trying to find "expert witnesses" by going through friends' address books. With an hour to spare, I managed to get one person to come into court, a young photographer, who made some fairly insubstantial comments about fashion modelling. These made no impression on the jury, who in any case seemed to have stopped listening to the evidence a long time before.

The client went down for two years. He would have to serve it in solitary confinement since, as a pornographer, he would be beaten up by other prisoners.

A notorious racket

"Clerking", as it is commonly known, is the most notorious racket in the legal profession, and among its victims are British taxpayers. Most people charged with an offence in this country hire their solicitors with legal aid. The solicitor is then paid by the government for his or her work on the case. However, while a solicitor is claiming what can be as much as £40 an hour for a court appearance, he or she may well be sitting in the office working on another case. Meanwhile, an untrained person like me makes the necessary symbolic appearance, and is paid about £2.50 an hour by the firm of solicitors.

Furthermore, a solicitor may be claiming payments for doing several pieces of work at once, all delegated to others. Like any businessperson, he or she has to cover certain overheads, mainly office costs, but is still left with large profits, made in a simple, capitalist way. It is all legal, and quite accepted practice.

For those fortunate enough to be on the right side of the law, clerking is a fine institution. It provides outsiders with a fascinating insight into the workings of the legal system. Most are struck, not so much by the incompetence, lies and simple unfairness around them, but by the degree to which this is accepted as normal by those in the profession.

One man I represented in Kent was charged on two accounts: threat to murder and threat to commit arson. The Crown Prosecutor decided that he did not have enough evidence for the latter, lesser charge, but in the formal letter announcing this, the count numbers were muddled, and the

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charge of threat to murder was dropped. The Crown Prosecutor did not realise the mistake until five minutes before the case opened, so he could not offer *any* evidence on the remaining charge that the defendant faced. The case was thrown out of court in two minutes, leaving the intended victim incredulous and outraged, while the defending barrister chuckled. It was a "not guilty" verdict notched in his belt.

The next day I was back in London, this time with a middle-aged woman who had pleaded guilty to using stolen chequebooks and selling the goods she had bought with the cheques. Evidence was presented that her four-year-old son needed an operation urgently to save his hearing. The National Health Service could not do it in time, and the cost of private treatment was £1,000. Hence the woman's rather uncharacteristic entry into the world of crime.

I sat and watched as the judge reduced the woman to a sobbing wreck, telling her she was "contemptible" and "greedy", and deserved prison. He finished by saying that although it was "disgusting" that she used her child as an excuse, he would give her only a two-year probation order and a large fine. As we left the courtroom, I ranted in despair to the woman's barrister. He just laughed at my naive indignation. "That man was a magistrate," he said. "What kind of justice did you think he dished out?"

Lighter moments

The job was not without its lighter moments. I spent two hours in a police cell with a prostitute who entertained me with stories of embarrassed clients she had greeted on the street, and even magistrates she had faced in court with whom she had been on first-name terms. I might have not believed these stories if it were not for the red face of the station sergeant when she greeted him as "Mickey" and asked after his wife.

Another client I visited in the cells was charged with importing 100 kilograms of hashish from Africa. He read through the comprehensive prosecution evidence, nodded, and then, with a completely straight face, asked what the chances were of getting away with "personal use".

But the widespread sense of humour I found seemed only to reflect people's resignation at the ludicrous way the legal system often works. No voices were raised when one of my clients, a confessed heroin addict, was remanded in custody, although he wanted desperately to attend a drug rehabilitation course on which he had got a place after months of waiting.

On one assignment, I visited a 19-year-old boy who had to wait in prison for three months to be tried for stealing a car stereo. Again, as with other clients, I was asked what he could say that might get him bail, and again, I did not have the guts to admit that I had no idea, and should not have been sent to consult him in the first place.

Some of those charged were wise to the game their solicitors played. During one consultation, a woman explained to me that although she had pleaded guilty to possession of a small amount of heroin, the police were claiming that when she was caught she had shouted, "So what if I'm a heroin dealer." The astonishment I showed at this obvious lie must have been a dead give-away. "Not been clerking long?" she said. "Get us a proper solicitor."

SECRECY

Whose right to our history?

The government's attempt to suppress the memoirs of another retired spy looks foolish because his story is public elsewhere, and, as* ED HARRIMAN *reports, it is a swashbuckling tale

WHEN THE security service told Anthony Cavendish it wouldn't agree to the publication of his book, *Inside Intelligence*, Cavendish — who is wealthy and votes Tory — simply printed it privately and sent it out as a 160-page extended "Christmas card" to friends. When the *Scotsman* ran large swathes of the book, the government sued. And lost. It also lost its appeal in the Scottish courts. So now it's taking its much bruised case to the House of Lords.

The government has a problem. The passage it has singled out as exceptionally objectionable and in need of suppression is Cavendish's account of his adventures as a young MI6 officer between 1948 and 1952, the early years of the Cold War. Cavendish, who was just 22 when he joined, was one of a handful of officers who ran Latvian, Lithuanian and Estonian agents back into the Soviet Baltic republics in the hopes of collecting intelligence, fomenting resistance to Stalin or at least spreading mayhem.

It was all swashbuckling stuff, involving dashes across the Baltic at night in high-speed patrol boats, handing out cyanide tablets to the would-be anti-Soviet Pimpernels along with radios and explosives, and hoping they wouldn't be caught. It's a whopping good yarn, all in the defence of the Free World at a time — now 40 years ago — when fighting Stalin was considered by most people in Britain to be a bloody good thing.

Cavendish wrote it so his children would know what their father did during the (cold) war. The government now claims that this is a threat to national security, and that he, as other MI6 officers, must be bound to silence for life like an Ottoman court eunuch or an Italian mafiosi sworn to *omerta*. Its real motive is to sustain its discipline over the security services and dissuade other retired agents from rushing into print.

Unfortunately for the government the story has been told in excruciating detail elsewhere — in a five-hour drama documentary series broadcast by East German television and seen in Scandinavia in the early 1970s.

The East German films show how anti-Soviet Balts, primarily young Latvians, were recruited out of "displaced person" camps in the British zone in Germany and taken to Britain where they were trained in unconventional warfare. They also show how captured Nazi patrol boats — *Schnell* boats — were taken to Vospers on the English south coast to have their engines souped up. These were then re-crewed with some of the same German sailors and officers who had sailed them during the war. Under the guise of the British Control Commission Fishery Protection Service, MI6 had a high-powered and effective way of landing agents by moonlight in rubber dinghies along the Baltic coast.

Once ashore, the resistance fighters buried their weapons and radios and made contact with local anti-Soviet groups. Cavendish, and a few others from MI6, ran the operations with the Royal Navy from Hamburg and ports along the north German coast. The captain of the German crews, Hans Helmut Klose, then a Lt Commander, retired a few years ago as Admiral and Commander in Chief of the West German Fleet.

In the East German television films Cavendish is portrayed handing out the cyanide tablets just before Klose set off in his boat with the agents to speed across the Baltic at night. The films also include several interviews with men living in the Soviet Union, claiming to have been the very agents sent in by MI6 on those boats, who were captured, "turned" and began working for the Soviets. They could be lying, but it seems they weren't. Klose and other Western experts have confirmed that the drama documentaries, though obviously propagandistic in intent, are factually correct in remarkable detail. The films make a mockery of the government's attempt to quash Cavendish's book.

A curious country

Britain, however, is a curious country. We alone in the Western Alliance have a sheet anchor attached to the nation's memory, an officially administered dose of historical amnesia in the form of the 30 Year Rule. Combined with the Official Secrets Act, and a propensity to farm out state papers only to those historians who will observe unspoken proprieties, it remains only for governments of the day to hobble mavericks — such as Cavendish and Peter Wright — through the courts.

Margaret Thatcher now seems to want to go one further, and chloroform the entire British public to any pain which may be caused by contact with the messy and disturbing chapters of Britain's secret wars.

Cavendish's Baltic run wasn't the only attempt to infiltrate "resistance fighters" into the Soviet bloc in the early days of the Cold War. There were others. They were all inspired by the same mad hope of touching off a widespread revolt against Stalin throughout Eastern Europe. And they were all "blown", with the loss of hundreds of agents killed, an entire sector of MI6 operations compromised. Even today there is considerable resentment felt by MI6 officers who then voiced concern that these operations had been "neutralised" by Soviet intelligence services, only to be overruled.

The fates of the Albanian invasion attempts of 1949 and 1950 are the best known. Kim Philby,

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The stuff of which swashbuckling spy tales are made: "Here's the cyanide; if the Russkies catch you, you know what to do. . ."

who was MI6's liaison with the CIA in Washington at the time, is reasonably assumed to have tipped off the KGB. But Tory Lord Nicholas Bethell has shown in his recent book, *The Great Betrayal*, that operational security was so lax that MI6 planners must also bear heavy responsibility.

The RAF cooperated with MI6 in parachuting Ukrainian patriots into the Soviet Union. Of these Philby wrote (in his autobiography, *My Silent War*): "A first party, equipped by the British with W/T [wireless telegraph] and other clandestine means of communication, was sent into the Ukraine in 1949, and disappeared. Two more parties were sent the following year, and remained equally silent."

As for 1951, Philby writes: "Within a month the British had dropped three six-man parties, the aircraft taking off from Cyprus. One party was dropped midway between Lwow and Tarnopol; another near the headwaters of the Prut, not far from Kolomyya; and a third just inside the borders of Poland, near the source of the San . . . I do not know what happened to the parties concerned. But I can make an informed guess."

Leaving aside Philby's deadpan delivery, this is not a happy tale. There were other agents, including members of the fiercely nationalist and anti-Soviet White Russian organisation, NTS. Of these a lesser author writes (in a 1982 Soviet publication, *CIA Target — The USSR*):

> In the confusion that followed the collapse of the Nazi Reich, the NTS managed to assure the chiefs of the Secret Intelligence Service that they had left a network of agents behind, in the Soviet Union. The British nibbled at the bait . . . And the CIA, learning of the British breakthrough, also made eager contact . . . [Agents] were smuggled into the Soviet Union with CIA, and partly Secret Intelligence Service, aid. In 1951-54, the Soviet security rendered harmless the following American and British agents smuggled into the Soviet Union: Yakut, Kudryavtsev, Pishchikov, Remouga, Markov, Lakno, Novikov, and others.

One may be sceptical of Soviet-inspired accounts. But for Cavendish's adventure the evidence is confirmed by Western intelligence sources. There is one landing, recounted in the East German film, where Klose's patrol boat came under fire from shore at a landing site which had never been used before, and was known only to the few MI6 and other personnel immediately involved. Philby, in the British Embassy in Washington, couldn't have known. Klose has confirmed that the incident happened. The leak must have come from a low, operational level.

The late Commander Anthony Courtney, the Conservative MP compromised by the Soviets with photographs of him and a woman in a Moscow bedroom in the early 1960s, made cryptic reference to this in his autobiography, *Sailor in a Russian Frame* (1968). He was the Royal Navy man assigned to work alongside Cavendish and the MI6 team. Courtney wrote:

> . . . I found myself working closely with the Secret Intelligence Service . . . by providing the SIS with direct naval assistance in the Baltic . . . I was struck by the potential capabilities of stripped-down ex-Kriegsmarine "E" boat hulls, powered by the incomparable twin Mercedes-Benz 518 diesel engines. With my assistants, the Staff Officers (Intelligence) at Hamburg and Kiel I was frequently at Lubeck and Flensburg and other smaller harbours such as Eckernforde and Kappeln, from which we mounted our operations. Little did I know that the penetration of the Foreign Office and the SIS by the Russian intelligence service must have not only doomed our efforts from the start, but had involved me personally in sending many a brave man into the jaws of a Soviet trap.

Able men involved

How did it happen? How did MI6 come to send agents to their certain capture, for many death, for others to be "turned" to lure more agents to this fate even after the operations were suspected to have been "blown"?

The Foreign Office was keen on fighting the Cold War at the time. Able men were involved. Gladwyn Jebb, now Lord Gladwyn, then an Under Secretary, chaired what was called the Jebb Committee which coordinated anti-Soviet strategy. In 1948 the Information and Research Department (IRB) was set up to feed propaganda to the press, following an internal paper on the Soviet threat written by Christopher Mayhew, then Parliamentary Under Secretary. Patrick Dean (later Sir Patrick) and Robert Cecil were involved in Foreign Office-intelligence liaison. And Sir Stewart Menzies, Director of SIS, enjoyed unparalleled support from the fiercely anti-Soviet Ernest Bevin, then Foreign Secretary. Menzies had direct access to Bevin, whose approval was required for any operation — such as these — which, if discovered, could embarrass the government, let alone fuel Stalin's colossal paranoia.

Nonetheless, when Menzies was replaced as "C" in 1951 by a military man, Major-General John Sinclair, aggressive clandestine anti-Soviet operations took on renewed impetus, especially among officers anxious to show the fast growing and slightly bullying CIA who knew the ropes. Sadly, the Soviets seem to have known the ropes better.

Readers who prefer the official, conventional version of Britain's role in the Cold War are recommended to read Alan Bullock's three-volume biography of Ernest Bevin. In the 896-page volume devoted to Bevin as Foreign Secretary they will find no mention of this, nor of MI6, nor even its Director, Churchill's confidant, and Philby's boss — Sir Stewart Menzies. Bullock, whose biography may be exemplary in many respects, observed standard form.

One might also settle down with Hugh Thomas's *History of the Cold War*, published last year. Hugh Thomas has advised Margaret Thatcher, he is Lord Gladwyn's son-in-law and so is well placed to enquire about relations between MI6 and the Foreign Office during the years in question. Yet Thomas makes only the briefest mention of Sir Stewart Menzies and MI6, and makes nothing of the Foreign Office's clandestine anti-Soviet programme.

Our elective dictators would have us read only officially condoned versions of the nation's recent past, to accept that these alone survive as the record of our times. What if we choose to read, in addition, more personal, idiosyncratic and in some respects fuller accounts from people such as Cavendish and Wright, warts and all? The government now wants the House of Lords to confirm that it has already made the choice for us all.

Britain is a curious country. We alone in the Western Alliance have a sheet anchor attached to the nation's memory, an officially administered dose of historical amnesia in the form of the 30 Year Rule. Combined with the Official Secrets Act, it remains only for governments to hobble mavericks through the courts

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Share schemes don't give workers power

Mrs Thatcher is keen on ballots over stopping work, but, asks* GEOFFREY GOODMAN, *what about democracy at work?

FOR TEN YEARS or more we have heard scarcely a word about a subject which, in the 1960s and certainly in the 1970s, possessed all the glittering prospects of a newly discovered wonder-drug capable of solving most of the problems of working for a living. I refer, of course, to industrial democracy.

It really was the great hope in the sky. Whatever became of that glitter?

To be sure it was never perceived as the most seductive of stimulants even when it seemed to have reached the top of the Labour government's political agenda in 1977 with the publication of the Bullock Report.

Even then there were as many sceptics about the real value of industrial democracy among the ranks of trade union leaders as there were in the boardrooms of British industry. Indeed the Confederation of British Industry swore eternal hostility to Lord Bullock's report before the ink was dry.

The few articulate and passionate advocates of its virtues like Jack Jones (himself a member of the Bullock Committee while still general secretary of the Transport and General Workers Union) were openly challenged by a number of their TUC colleagues. The miners' leaders, the railway unions and the trade union leaders in the gas and electricity industries saw nothing to their advantage in Lord Bullock's proposals for drawing half the membership of *their* state boards from *their* own unions.

Bullock proposed a formula then known as "2X + Y" which, in effect, would have provided half the membership of company boards of directors from the unions, half from the employers with a few independents added for "neutral" balance. This formula would have applied to all firms with 2,000 employees or more. That formula was enough to kill the concept of industrial democracy stone dead.

Labour and enterprise councils

A revival is the underlying tone of a new Fabian Society pamphlet by Lord (Bill) McCarthy, *The Future of Industrial Democracy* (Fabian Society £1.50), which argues two central propositions. The first is a need for the Labour Party's policy planners to put some flesh on the bones of last year's election document *People at Work* which vaguely proposed a revival of the industrial democracy concept as a "foundation for economic policy and planning". McCarthy's idea is that there should be a modest but determined attempt to put industrial democracy back on the map by promising that a Labour government would establish works councils (he calls them enterprise councils) and that these councils would jointly decide a number of limited items such as the application of works rules, health and safety policies, administration of pension schemes and the development and operation of all forms of training.

His second major proposal is radical. He wants non-unionists to be eligible for membership of "enterprise councils" and to be free to sit alongside trade union members. McCarthy is wise enough in the world of trade union corns to know perfectly well that he is treading on a great number of them by making this proposal. Yet surely he is right. He accepts that he has changed his mind about " single channel" representation. Twenty years ago when he sat on the Labour Party's study group on industrial democracy (of which Jack Jones was chairman and I too was a member) Bill McCarthy was an ardent advocate of "single channel" representation. Anything less was seen as a weakening of the trade union position and a virtual invitation to non-unionism. All roads to industrial democracy had to be channelled through trade union conduits — the "single channel". The Bullock Report took the same view for all worker representation in the management of their companies and industries.

> *Somewhere along the road to more democracy at work there are important dividends to be collected in the process of making society more civilised — and efficient*

McCarthy's change of mind occurred not least because he recognises that in the current climate (and the likely future industrial ambience) it would be unrealistic to try to confine any serious development in industrial democracy to trade union membership. He now sees a virtue in opening up participation rights to non-unionists as well as trade union members — since it would, he believes, encourage the spread of trade unionism.

Changing view of industry

McCarthy also comes to terms with the enormous changes that have taken place in the structure and employment patterns of our industries in the last 10 to 15 years. Bullock's idea of concentrating on those firms with at least 2,000 employees is completely outdated. Such a proposal would now exclude more than two-thirds of the country's labour force. As Bill McCarthy says, "it would condemn Labour's vision of industrial democracy to a steadily shrinking and increasingly atypical fraction of the working population, leaving aside the growth sectors which contain some of the most authoritarian and irresponsible employers".

For all these reasons, he adds, "an effective campaign for industrial democracy below board level cannot be mounted on such a narrow base. A way must be found to modify the pure spirit of the single channel principle as applied by majority Bullock to the boardroom. At the same time the reasonable fears and concerns that lay behind their participation model are still important and relevant: they have to be considered in a rather different context and a very different time."

That is why he opts for an enabling Act by a Labour government that would require all private firms with more than 500 employees to establish enterprise councils to cover the modest items he lists. Nor does he see why the nationalised industries and the public sector generally should not come within this legislation. The crucial point is to elect the councils by universal secret ballot and to make sure (as a modest protection for the unions) that trade unionists enjoy "certain prescribed rights of nomination".

McCarthy insists: "A legal framework of the kind envisaged here would provide trade unions and trade unionists with unrivalled opportunities. In areas where unions were recognised, union representatives would find it easier to service members and influence the decisions of management. In areas where non-unionism is now the norm there would be greater incentives to organise and recruit . . ."

So the old basket of Bullock proposals is effectively chucked out — though the spirit and the ethos of industrial democracy are still retained, albeit in muted form. The basic view remains that somewhere along the road to more democracy at work there are important dividends to be collected in the whole process of making our society more civilised, as well as more efficient.

No miracles

To be fair to Lord Bullock, he never expected miracles overnight, nor was he ever persuaded that having workers on the board was the final objective for industrial democracy.

Of course there are some who now believe that Thatcherism has not only eliminated the concept of industrial democracy but rendered it unnecessary by the spread of share ownership. They will point to the 9 million people who now own shares — a threefold increase since 1979. It is true that they include a substantial number of working people (trade unionists among them) who have bought a modest slice in Mrs Thatcher's opportunity state. Isn't that *their* answer to industrial democracy, circa 1977 etc? Well no, it isn't. Of course this is what Mrs Thatcher and her lieutenants Lawson, Young, Moore, Tebbit *et al* would wish us to believe.

Yet the truth is somewhat different from the beguiling statistics handed out by the Chancellor and his messengers. Share ownership still amounts to only a very small percentage of working people's

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financial stake in private industry — less than two per cent. It is in no way a substitute for industrial democracy and, still more, is not in fact perceived as such by the vast majority of workers who own shares. Precisely.

Nor is share ownership providing — or likely to provide — the shop floor and the "computer deck" with a significant voice in how their company or industry could be run more effectively.

Industrial democracy is still a far distance from becoming the flavour of the month. But unless you believe, as some plainly do, that we can continue to run a society on born-again managerial authority; on fear and the rod of unemployment, and prompted by the crude incentives of widening social divisiveness, then the way must be open for the spirit of industrial democracy to return. □

Geoffrey Goodman is former industrial editor of the Daily Mirror.

LOCAL ELECTIONS

No return to two-party politics

Psephologists* JOHN CURTICE, CLIVE PAYNE *and* ROBERT WALLER *give their considered verdict on last Thursday's local council elections

THE GOVERNMENT'S post-election honeymoon is indeed over. That much at least was a clear message of the local election results.

Wheras as recently as March the government enjoyed a 7-point lead over Labour in the opinion polls, the local results indicated that the two parties were neck and neck with each other, on the equivalent of 40 per cent nationally, with the Social and Liberal Democrats on 18 per cent. As Mrs Thatcher herself admitted, the Conservatives have played the price for their disunity on the poll tax and the social security reforms.

But Labour's post-election euphoria was as much a reflection of its recent low morale as the underlying strength of its performance. It made only modest progress compared with the 1984 local elections, the equivalent stage of the political cycle in the last parliament, while in many places its position was still weaker than in 1980. Its progress was clearly a patchy one as the following table, based on ward-by-ward results collected by the BBC and the *Guardian*, shows:

	Change in percentage share since 1984			
	Con	Lab	SLD	
South	+1.6	+1.1	-4.4	(103)
Midlands	-0.2	+3.2	-3.0	(79)
North	+0.1	+4.3	-5.1	(273)
England total	+0.4	+3.4	-4.6	(455)

Table based on those wards fought by all three main parties in both 1984 and 1988.

Yet again Labour proved to be stronger in the north of England than in the south (although this represents catching-up since the seats were last contested in 1984, rather than a further polarisation). A not unimportant consequence was that this made the party's net gain in seats (106) rather higher than it otherwise would have been. For a much larger proportion of the councils in the North of England had elections last week than in the south.

Not that it was all gloom for Labour in the south. If we compare the results with last year's general election, constituency by constituency, we find that on average Labour's support rose by 7½ percentage points in the North. In contrast, in Southampton Itchen Labour's support rose by 16 points, in Brighton Kemptown by 11 points and in Basildon by no less than 16 points. But the number of places where we can make this kind of comparison is limited in the south of England to a few urban areas. Whether they are typical of the south in general, or indeed also a reflection of the position in London is a crucial but unanswerable question. But even if Labour has generally made a little progress in the south in the last year, it has not been enough to reverse the losses of the 1983-87 period, let alone the longer term decline of the last 25 years.

But while the results confirmed the recent trend in the opinion polls so far as Labour was concerned, the surprise of the elections was the strength of the SLD's performance. No opinion poll in the last two months has given the SLD alone more than 13 per cent and only one has given the SLD and SDP combined more than 15 per cent. Yet projected to a national result the SLD performance implied a vote of 18 per cent. Further, most polls had showed the SLD to be only twice as strong as the SDP; but the election proved to be a disaster for Dr Owen's "independent force".

In 84 wards fought by both SLD and SDP candidates, the SLD won 18 per cent and the SDP four per cent. Only in a handful of places did the SDP outpoll the SLD. Its brightest spot in this respect was Crawley where it was ahead of the SLD in five out of nine wards. But Crawley was the one place where the SDP fought the SLD on a wide front and where the previous Alliance strength had been established by the SDP rather than the Liberals. In truth the result there was a disaster for both parties with just five per cent apiece. Where the Liberals had a strong local and/or parliamentary election base the SDP could make little headway.

It is, of course, not crucial to Owen's strategy that he can outpoll the SLD — but the SDP did need to show that it could do well enough in strong SLD areas to cost its former allies seats, thereby demonstrating the need for the SLD to seek an electoral pact. The weakness of the SDP in strong Liberal areas was thus a particular blow to the Doctor. Further, it was by no means clear that the SDP's votes came solely at the expense of the SLD. In the following table we look only at the results in those constituencies where in one or more wards the SDP fought the SLD and compare the result with those where only the SLD stood.

	Percentage change since 1984			
	Con	Lab	SLD	
SDP and SLD fight	-2.6	+4.0	+5.8	(83)
SLD only fight	-1.4	+3.6	-2.1	(82)

The intervention of an SDP candidate seems on average to have cost the SLD about 3½ per cent of the vote. But equally the average Conservative candidate also suffered a one point loss of support where the SDP fought. Some polls have suggested that the SDP has some attraction for Conservative voters, and this appears to be confirmed by the results. But it means that in fighting a Conservative candidate for victory (which most SLD candidates are), the net cost of the presence of an Owenite was little more than two points — enough only to cost the SLD a handful of votes.

Similarly damaging to the SDP's cause was its performance where it did not face competition from a SLD candidate. The SDP could only demonstrate that it would be an effective partner in such a pact if it performed in those wards as well as an SLD candidate would have done. This it failed to do. In all of the 23 wards in our sample where the SDP had no SLD opposition its support fell by 4.7 points compared with the Alliance performance in 1984, little worse than the 4.6 point drop suffered on average by SLD candidates. But all but a handful of the SDP candidates were standing in wards where the Alliance won less than 20 per cent of the vote in 1984 — and in general the fall in the SLD vote was smaller in such seats, just 2.3 points. On average SDP candidates seem to have been less good at holding onto the former Alliance vote.

Some commentators have tried to account for the SLD's performance by suggesting that the Liberals and the Alliance normally do better in local elections than in national opinion polls. Not so. While there are undoubtedly individual places where there is a Liberal local government vote which does not translate fully into a parliamentary vote (Liverpool, Pendle), there are equally some places where the opposite is true (Rochdale). Across the country as a whole there is no consistent pattern. While in the 1987 local elections the Alliance performance was about two points better than in the national polls, in 1986 it was if anything one point worse. This time, the difference between local election and national opinion poll performance is unusually large.

The SLD clearly ended up the loser with a net loss of 63 seats. Further, the decline in the number of SLD councillors was not stemmed by any "plateau effect" whereby well entrenched councillors were able to defeat the adverse tide by dint of their personal popularity. For while the fall in the SLD vote was just 2.3 percentage points in those seats where the Alliance scored less than 20 per cent in 1984, it was as much as 9.5 points in those seats where the 1984 score was between 30 and 40 per cent. Only among those in a really strong position — among candidates starting with more than 40 per cent of the vote was there some sign of a better performance — average drop 6.8 points.

All the same, the local elections suggest a greater loyalty among the SLD's supporters than had previously been apparent — what with Davids Maclennan and Steel's "dead parrot" leadership and David Owen's Sid Vicious impersonation. Indeed, the most disappointing outcome of the elections for Labour was their failure to herald a return to two-party politics.

The elections saw Labour make some progress in its battle both with the Conservatives for office and with the SLD as the opposition. But on both fronts there is still a long way to go. □

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Homeworkers: bottom of the rag trade heap

For three centuries new immigrants to Britain have scraped a living around Fashion Street in London's East End.* AMY GAMERMAN *reports on today's hidden workforce

THE SINGER sewing machine is a collector's item, a black and gold antique mounted on an industrial platform. It stands against the window, where it receives the most light in a dim room with green walls, bare of furniture apart from an aged three-piece suite and a television set. This is the living room of Fatima's East London council flat, which she shares with her husband and five children. It is also the workroom where she sews skirts for a local factory workshop. Fatima is a homeworker, a member of the invisible workforce that supports London's rag trade.

The warren of narrow streets around Brick Lane in Spitalfields has been the site of London's garment industry for the past three hundred years. Fashion Street, with its decrepit warehouses and wholesale shops, has survived on the "sweated" labour of Huguenots, Jews, and now the diverse local community of Bengalis, Bangladeshis, and Pakistanis. Today's small factories manufacture leather garments, ladies' coats, suits, separates, men's trousers, and children's clothes. These small, owner-managed concerns — known as CMTs because they cut, make and trim garments — supply the low end of the market, as well as High Street outlets like Top Shop, C&A, and Littlewoods.

It is a long chain. Top Shop alone depends on over 200 manufacturers. They subcontract smaller manufacturers to make up an order who in turn split it into even smaller lots and parcel it out to CMTs. Employing an average of three to four people, their strength lies in their ability to supply quickly on demand.

Homeworkers are the final link. They are almost exclusively female and Asian. With few exceptions, they work illegally, claiming social security and avoiding tax. When a CMT receives an order for ladies' skirts, the material is cut according to pattern and sent out by van to homeworkers. The completed garments are collected and returned to the workshops, where they are finished and pressed before being sent back up the chain to the retailer. Between five and fifty homeworkers service each workshop. They are usually paid by the piece, although some workshops will pay a flat rate on the basis of a particular worker's speed and skill. The going piece rate for skirts varies between forty and sixty pence. Fatima earned forty pence for sewing a skirt which she saw for sale at a Top Shop branch for £10. Less skilled homeworkers sew coat and jacket linings, which are returned to be stitched inside the "shell". Linings are the bottom of the market, rating between ten and twenty pence per piece. Workers are not paid for faulty garments.

Although an "enhanced rate" determined by the Wages Council is fixed on a registered homeworker's income to compensate for her costs, most are employed off the books and pay their own overheads, including the extra electricity. Thread is supplied by the workshop. The biggest expense is setting up. A new industrial sewing machine costs more than £300. Even secondhand a machine can cost between £150 and £200, so most homeworkers are forced to borrow the money.

> *'Homeworking is a secret which women keep from friends, as well as from the authorities. . . Although homeworkers are most in need of the protection which a union could provide, their isolation makes them inaccessible'*

Employers are required by law to keep lists of the names and addresses of the workers they use and to submit the lists regularly to the authorities. In fact this rarely happens. "The system just doesn't work," says Neil Kearney of the National Union of Tailors and Garment Workers.

'They can work all night . . .'

Jarden Models in Spitalfields produces between 1,000-2,000 coats each week, but has only two homeworkers on the books. On the books, these homeworkers earn seventeen pence per lining. I asked the manager how two people were able to complete so many linings each week. "I don't know, I don't care. They can work all night and all day as long as they get those linings in." Homeworkers will often split large orders with relatives or friends. Despite the manager's insistence that he does things by the book, the bulk of his outdoor workforce may well be going unrecorded.

Downstairs, Russell Kelly Limited is one of a number of small work units that supplies coats to high street retailers. Like Jarden Models, the unit sends linings out to homeworkers, who are paid in cash on delivery. The manager estimated that he uses 35 homeworkers, mostly Bengali, and all women. The managers of both these workshops are white. "The mixture of ownership is quite considerable," says Neil Kearney of the NUTGW, and many CMTs are Asian-managed. Chopra Limited on Commercial Street is a small workshop that produces ladies' skirts and blouses for the low end of the market. Three people were pressing skirts on machines when I visited. Mr Chopra put the number of his homeworkers at closer to fifty. They earn an average of forty or fifty pence for sewing skirts that he will sell for at least £5 to a wholesaler.

Responsibility for the low pay and unsupervised conditions of homeworkers is difficult to locate in this confused hierarchy of retailers, wholesalers, and workshops. Although high-profile retailers like Top Shop and C&A employ quality control inspectors to conduct routine checks on manufacturers, sub-contracted factories and workshops may slip through the net. As long as the quality of the garments is consistent, the working conditions will not be inspected. Workshops and small factories are facing hard times themselves with the competition from outside London, and increasingly from cheap volume production from India and East Asia. As retailers break into these overseas markets for direct supply, wholesalers are also being squeezed out. The Centre for Small Business in Spitalfields reported the recent shutdown of eight local CMTs, with three more imminent closures. With this rapid turnover, relationships between retailers, wholesalers, and workshops are difficult to trace, and working conditions even harder to monitor.

The confusion is mirrored in the policy towards homeworkers of local authorities like Tower Hamlets which covers Spitalfields. Tony Buckley, Economic Development officer for Tower Hamlets, says that homeworkers are "suppliers" rather than employees and, as such, beyond the employer's official responsibility.

Otherwise, home-workers fall in the cracks between housing and employment offices. Philip Machen, an Environmental Health officer responsible for the Brick Lane area, comes across homeworkers indirectly when investigating noise complaints. Invariably, the source of the noise is an industrial sewing machine, running at night once children have been put to bed. On occasional surprise visits to council estates, he has found a sewing machine installed in one room of the flat, with whole families sleeping in the other. "It's too common a problem to warrant eviction," he says. A statutory notice is served, and sometimes the housing officer will be alerted. But in most cases, the official response ends there. The officer may suggest ways of cutting down the noise, recommending the addition of rubber mountings to the machine and table, insulation, even soundproofing tiles.

But the conditions of the homeworkers themselves, and their possible exploitation, are not the responsibility of the Environmental Health Office. Try the Health and Safety Executive, Machen suggested. But Mr Fros-Lowe, the Health and Safety Executive officer for Brick Lane, was unaware of any problem. "We have responsibility for places of employment, but where that's some-

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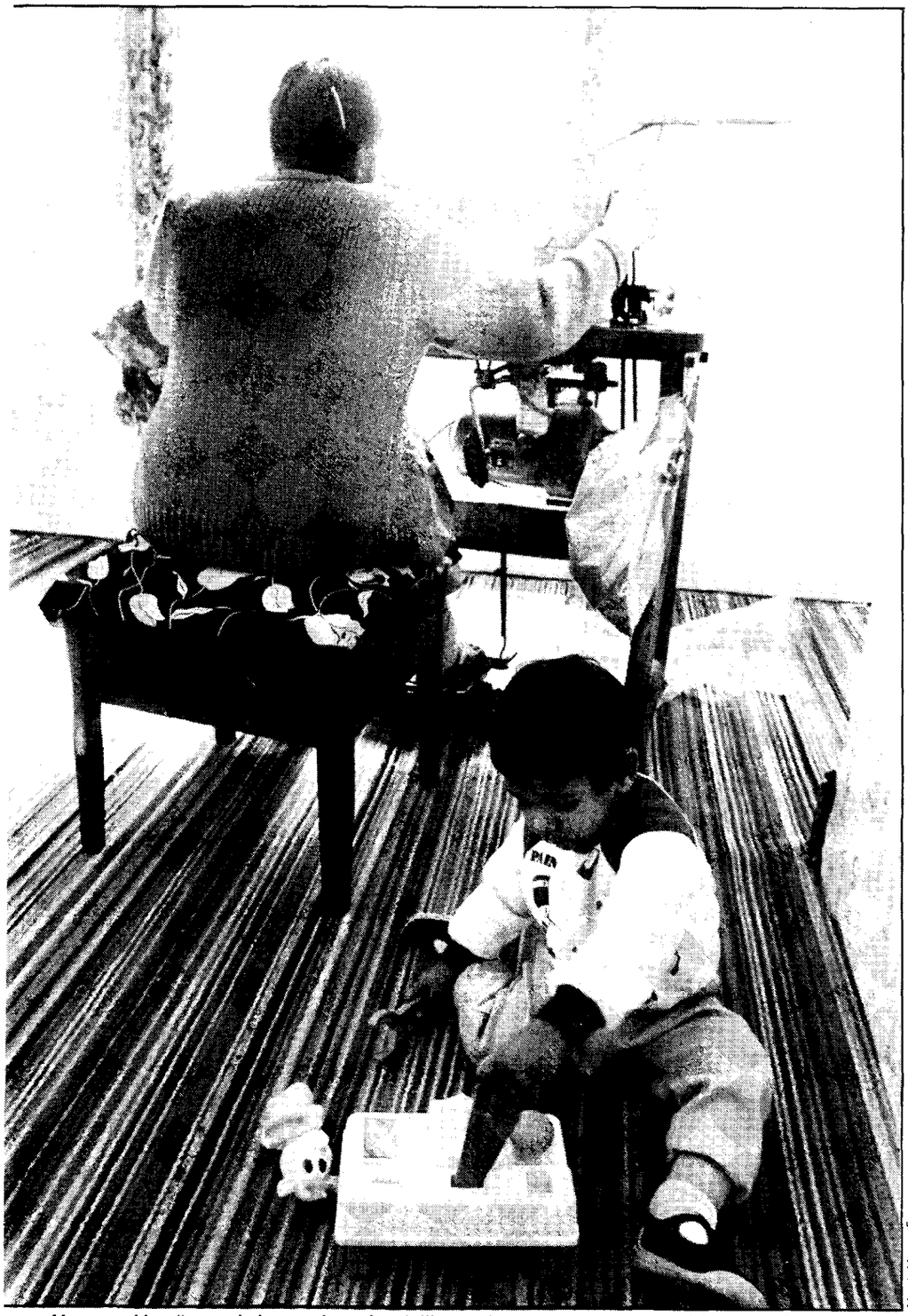

Maggie Murray/Format

Homeworking: "not an industry where there's likely to be any risk, apart from pricking your finger — and exploitation, of course"

one's home, we don't count that." When pressed on the subject of homeworking, he answered, "Nothing has ever arisen to have us look into their situations at all. . . It's not an industry where there's likely to be any risk, apart from pricking your finger — and exploitation, of course."

Fear of an alien culture

Rukia, a widow with three children, supports her family on supplementary benefit and the money she earns sewing linings for full-length raincoats. Every two weeks she receives a delivery of 200-300 unsewn linings, which she divides with her sister, who lives in a council flat above hers. The linings, which she sews on a machine bought with borrowed money and installed in her daughter's room, include shoulder pads, gathered cuffs, pockets, and several labels. Uninterrupted, Rukia can sew up to five linings in an hour. The rate: eighteen pence per lining.

"Social security isn't enough money. My daughter needs new shoes, the telephone line was cut in February." Although Rukia could earn more money in a factory, her fear keeps her at home: fear of an alien culture and a language she doesn't fully understand, fear of the men who work in factories, fear of walking unaccompanied on streets where she has been mugged twice. The English language classes which she takes at a local community centre provide her only form of social contact with London at large.

This isolation is the homeworkers' vulnerability. Afraid to being found out by the council and by the DHSS, they are also reluctant to challenge their employers for fear of losing work. Homeworking is a secret which women keep from friends and acquaintances, as well as from the authorities. "We've had women who had contacted us but refused to divulge their name, or the name of their employer," says Neil Kearney of the NUTGW. Although homeworkers are most in need of the protection which a union could provide, their isolation makes them particularly inaccessible. "How do you find out where they are?" asked Barney Shuster, NUTGW area officer for East London. The West Midlands, an area with a high concentration of Asian garment workers, was the target of two specific attempts by the NUTGW to organise homeworkers in recent years. Union organisers tried to reach homeworkers through their male relatives, addressing men in the mosques and hoping that they would relay the message to female dependants. In another attempt to reach this hidden workforce, the NUTGW sent Asian women representatives. They were rejected by the community "for having broken with tradition".

An absence of women

In the bustle of Brick Lane it's easy to overlook the absence of Asian women. Skirting crates of vegetables on the narrow pavements, men carry bundles of tanned leather hide to basement workshops where other men fashion them into jackets. But there are no Asian women on the streets or in the workshops, or in the shops selling Halal meat or Indian sweets, or in the small restaurants, waiting on table or working behind the till. "Asian men don't want their wives to work in factories," said Tasneem Raja, a textiles teacher at the Tower Hamlets Training Forum. In her top-floor classroom, eight women sat at sewing machines practising buttonholes and fitted cuffs on calico fabric. The women who learn to sew here are encouraged to continue their training at a college for adult education. "Not for homeworking," Tasneem said.

A former homeworker herself, Tasneem sewed dresses at home shortly after arriving from Pakistan. A friend of her husband's brought the material each week, which she sewed while her seven-month old son slept during the day and after he had been put to bed at night. An inexperienced seamstress, she was able to sew one dress an hour, earning fifty pence. "It wasn't worth it. I didn't have the freedom to go out during the day, there was always a deadline to meet." With her husband's permission, she enrolled in a textiles course at a college for adult education, and later applied for the teaching job at the Training Forum. Her husband was initially reluctant, "but when he saw that there are only women here, it was all right." The course includes creche facilities.

The Asian community in East London boasts a wide-reaching supportive network for women of language classes, women's groups, workshops, and creches. There are women who will visit you when you are pregnant, accompany you to the doctor or the housing office, help you with English, and look after your children while you take classes in sewing and embroidery. By strengthening that network, more women might be enabled to escape the isolation and fear that sustains the homeworking phenomenon — a phenomenon with ancient roots that feeds into the worst aspects of modern enterprise culture.

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Mitterrand rallies left and centre

DAVID S. BELL *on the victory in France of "studious moderation"*

NEVER COUNT politicians as dead even when they are buried. This election has been an astonishing victory for the outgoing president Mitterrand. In 1986 the Socialist Party was comprehensively defeated in the National Assembly and regional elections; Mitterrand remained at the presidential palace, the Elysée, but without any support in the Assembly he was powerless. He was forced to accept right-wing prime minister, Jacques Chirac, whose government proceeded to undo what had been done by the Socialists from 1981 to 1986 and to privatise anything which could be unscrewed. Last year the right polled 56 per cent in local elections, the Communist Party has collapsed, and the values of French society (as measured by the pollsters) also shifted sharply to the right on such issues as unions, nationalisation and immigration. Yet Mitterrand won by 54.1 per cent of the vote to Chirac's 45.9 per cent in Sunday's second ballot run-off.

Mitterrand's ability to turn the tables so completely on the right was not achieved without cost. In a country which is profoundly conservative (the right, when united, was a consistent winner in local elections), Mitterrand ran on a minimalist programme. The campaign itself turned more on nuance than on detail or on the clash of ideological charter: the specific promises made in Mitterrand's manifesto (like the reimposition of a wealth tax) excited little comment. In other words Mitterrand, who could count on the firm support of the Socialist Party and, on the second ballot, the votes for the minor left-wing candidates, pitched his campaign at the centre, floating voter (*France Unie*).

The 34 per cent pull on the first ballot gave him the easier task. He pursued his "father of the nation" approach on the second ballot: not the fall of a sparrow nor the collapse of a deck chair escapes his attention. It was this ability to reassure which brought over the floating voter and it will make new premier Rocard's task that much easier when it comes to finding support for his government.

Victory was achieved by splitting the right, playing up its differences and pinching some of Barre, the centre candidate's, themes. The French right is split three ways into National Front, Gaullist and centre. Mitterrand's delayed entry into the campaign (almost, but not quite, at the last moment) allowed the Gaullist Chirac to devastate the centrist Barre who (here is the paradox) was more dangerous to Mitterrand on the second ballot. Mitterrand also pushed Chirac rightwards as the Gaullists tried to run the immigration issue so as to appeal to National Front voters. In this Chirac was not just unsuccessful, but alienated the moderate voters needed for the second ballot. Mitterrand also took up Barre's criticism of the Gaullists' *nomenklatura* — the appointment of their supporters to powerful positions — to which the electorate was sensitive.

Too far too fast

Jacques Chirac tried to go too far too fast by promising all manner of glories from the "free market" revolution of 1986. Not only did the economic growth not materialise (at least as

Le Pen in close-up

Paris

ON MAY DAY 1988, the biggest demonstration in Paris was not the traditional parade of the left in honour of the workers' day but that of Jean Marie Le Pen's National Front, in honour of Joan of Arc. Being in Paris for a few days, I reckoned that I could go on an anti-fascist demonstration any time. Going on a fascist demonstration, on the other hand, is an experience I hope to have few times in my life. It was also a chance to see the phenomenon of the National Front, buoyed by Le Pen's 14 per cent in the first round of the presidential election, up close.

So I caught the metro to central Paris and came upon the demonstration as it proceeded from St Augustin's church, past the Opera and down to the Louvre. Here stood four tricolours and a raised dais, just opposite the statue of Joan of Arc. On the dais stood a party with tricolour sashes, like some scene out of *Clochemerle*. In the middle, with a sash round his ample frame, was Jean Marie Le Pen himself.

Le Pen behaved like a Roman victor. As each cortege of the demonstration came into sight he clapped them and raised his clasped hands above his head in a victory salute. His beaming smile was an odd mixture of the pugilistic and the beatific.

The massed ranks passed in front of their champion, to an accompaniment (irony of ironies) of the Chorus of Hebrew Slaves from Verdi's *Nabucco* (recently called into service by British Airways for higher purposes). The masses were certainly in holiday mood. They carried banners, all in red, white and blue, indicating where in France they came from. The contingent from Brittany was led by women in Breton dress. That from the Pas de Calais was preceded by blacked-up miners in pit gear (the only black faces in sight). All were chanting "*La France aux Français*" (France for the French) and "*Mitterrand, c'est foutu, Jean Marie est dans la rue*". (Mitterrand's had it, Jean Marie is on the street.)

All were in their Sunday best. There were a lot of family groups and ex-servicemen appeared with their medals. A character attracted particular attention by having a bicycle with pictures of Jean Marie painted all over the wheels. Each contingent was accompanied by well-organised security guards, with numbered armbands and portable telephones.

And there, in the middle of each contingent, was the same group of young toughs with bomber jackets and boots that you see on any British National Front demonstration. Only here they blended, inconspicuous and accepted, into the rest of the cheering throng.

I bought a copy of *National Hebde*, the Front's weekly. Inside François Brigneau writes: "If you call Le Pen a racist, a xenophobe, an anti-semite, you have to admit that more and more French people have become, or are becoming, racists, xenophobes and anti-semites, etc. More than four million."

Someone handed me a hard-core anti-semitic tract, which accused all conventional politicians of being in thrall to the Jewish lobby and the Freemasons. It went on to deny the existence of the gas chambers. Another flyer I was handed advertised two books. One fantasised about Le Pen's first hundred days as president, when the last North African would be sent home. The other referred to a battle royal (on horseback!) between the defenders of French and European civilisation and the Arab hordes outside Poitiers. Somewhat dazed, I left.

The Front's own publications are already talking about the "Third Round": the municipal elections next year. In Marseilles, France's second city, Le Pen scored 28 per cent to Mitterrand's 26 per cent in the first round of the presidential elections. Le Pen could well parachute down to become the mayor of Marseilles next year.

Writing in his magazine, *L'Evenement du Jeudi*, Jean-Francois Kahn, a member of the centrist CDS, writes in favour of a "Republican Front" on the centre and centre-left against Le Pen and those on the right who compromise with him (such as Chirac's interior minister Charles Pasqua, who says that he and the Front have a certain number of "common values").

Whichever is the way to stop fascism in France in its 1980s variety, all European socialists and democrats should stop calling the Front "extreme right-wing" but should call a spade a fascist spade, or a cat a cat, as the French say.

Michael Heiser

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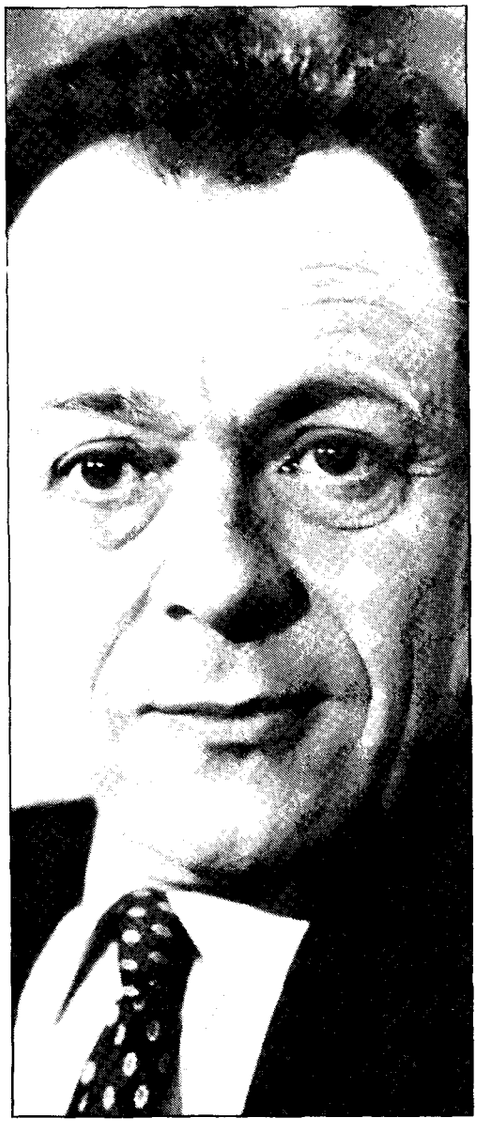


Camera Press

Michael Rocard, France's new premier: charged with forming a government which won't immediately be thrown out

expected) but Chirac's impetuosity led to demonstrations, strikes, and bungling. The main conservative party, the neo-Gaullist RPR, of which he is still leader, abused state patronage (*L'etat RPR*) and Chirac's tactic of stroking the crazies — i.e. playing to the extreme right — alienated the centre politicians grouped around Raymond Barre. Barre's popularity was for most of 1986-87 way above that of Chirac, so that if Mitterrand had resigned in that period it would not have profited the Prime Minister. Chirac played Salieri to Barre's Mozart until February 1986.

Machoisme failed

Even Chirac's desperate attempts to swing the elections in the last week were unsuccessful. Chirac put up Interior Minister Charles Pasqua to say that the "values" of the Gaullists and the National Front were the same. There was a "macho" attack on New Caledonian separatists and Captain Dominique Prieur ("heroine" of the Greenpeace killing) was sent back to France from detention in the Pacific in defiance of international law. More spectacularly there was the return of the hostages from the Lebanon after a deal with the captors. The release of the hostages was so self-servingly electoral that it probably did not help Chirac's campaign; in the event he alienated both the National Front supporters and the floating voters. As Pierre Bérégovoy, the president's campaign manager, said, the election victory was one for "reason".

Then there was the effect of French *Sun*-belt. In an astonishing manner the National Front surged upwards under the Chirac government; Le Pen, the Front's leader, began to articulate fears, disappointments and hatreds which people thought had been banished for ever. Mitterrand simply had to watch while centrists, repulsed, moved over to the Socialist camp.

The singularity of French politics in Europe is the existence of this large neo-fascist party. National Front voters did not believe Le Pen could win but they were attracted by the Front's campaign against inner-city crime and above all against immigration. Mitterrand's victory effectively prevents the poisoning of French politics by these issues but the Front has succeeded in removing from the agenda issues such as votes for migrant workers at local elections.

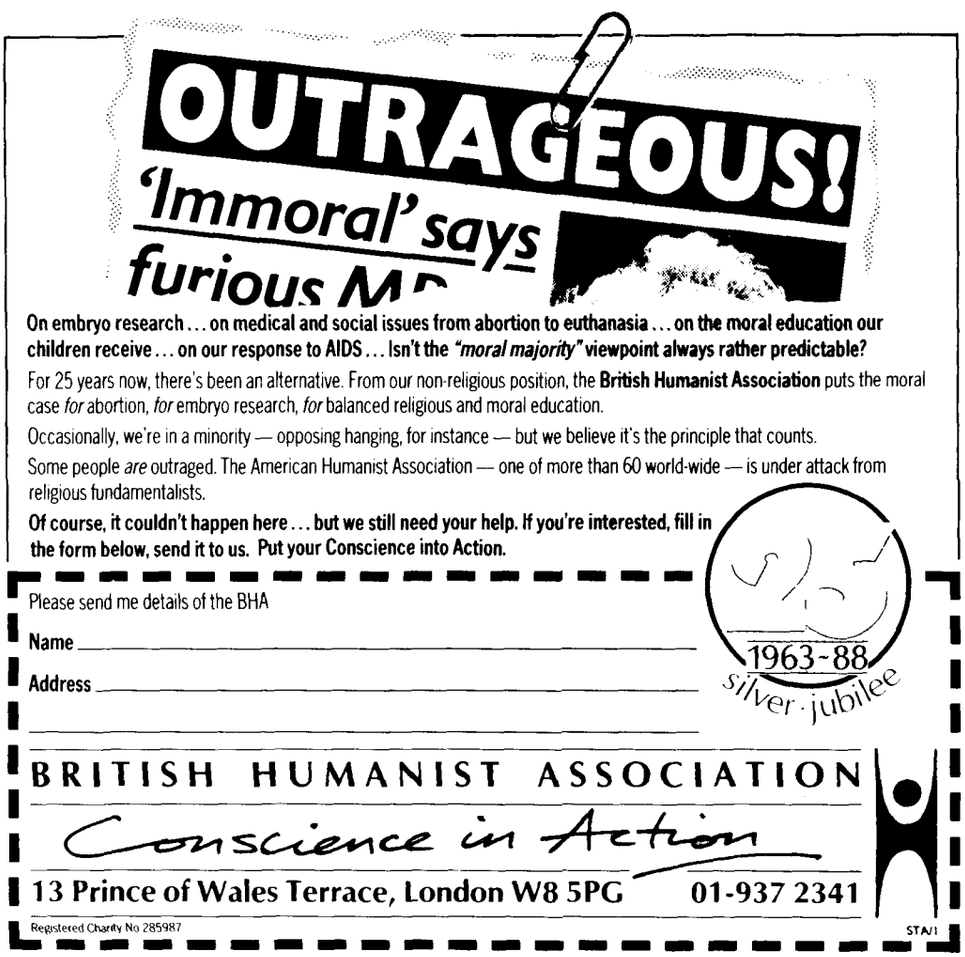
All hands to the machine

To the left of the French Socialist Party there is now a vacuum — which is better than an obstacle. The decline of the Communist Party continues: like a headache, you know when it starts but not when it is going to end. The other small parties (as represented by two Trotskyists, a dissident Communist and an Ecologist presidential candidate), are a negligible quantity. The Socialist Party machine is going to have to carry the burden of the forthcoming National Assembly election campaign; Lionel Jospin had already indicated that he will step down as general secretary and Laurent Fabius (former prime minister) is the favourite to take over with a brief to overhaul the organisation.

Mitterrand's victory over Chirac is a revenge for the right's contemptuous behaviour in 1986 and for two years of petty humiliations, but it is not a Socialist Party victory. It is the rally of the left — all of it — and the centre to the incumbent president around a programme of studious moderation. The National Assembly is dominated by the right (even without the Front) and it will need a further exercise of political skill either to entice the centre away from the conservatives or to find an appropriate issue on which to dissolve the Assembly and get a Socialist-led coalition elected. Not until the right is dislodged from the Assembly will Mitterrand be in full power and that will also need centre support.

Meanwhile, Mitterrand has to find, from the *macédoine* of centre parties and personalities, a government which will not be immediately thrown out. If anybody can do this, Mitterrand, a salamander of political infighting, can. And if anybody can do it for him, it is the prince of square shooters, Michel Rocard, appointed prime minister on Tuesday.

Mitterrand, in so many words, will have to continue to keep the centre apart from the conservative and Gaullist right and will depend on the Socialist Party's support for governments which, in the heady days of the Socialist-Communist alliance, it would have execrated. At the age of 71, Mitterrand has had a long political career which goes back to before the Resistance; now he has been elected for another seven years. He built up the Socialist Party from nothing and won elections others took as lost; anybody who casts that much bread on the waters deserves to have it come back as croissants. □



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The drama of W Germany's north-south divide

Convulsions are gripping the centre-right coalition leaving German industrialists scanning the horizon for a teutonic Mrs Thatcher.* CHRISTOPHER HARVIE *reports on the background to the uncertain advance of the Social Democrats in provincial elections

Tübingen

FIRST, a *bonne bouche* for Mrs Thatcher. German industrialists applaud her, although not in ways she would altogether approve of. She has the lowest levels of company taxation in Europe, she will throw state money at companies to set up in Britain, she has smashed the unions and wage rates are practically half those in the Bundesrepublik. As long as this born-again Taiwan keeps its currency low, it strikes some Germans as a more profitable place to set up in business than West Germany itself, with its high wages, powerful unions, strict environmental controls and an unpromising political outlook for the right.

Given Germany's enormous, and growing, exporting strength, this line — first taken by international business magazines like *Forbes* and the *Economist* late in 1987 — seems odd. But the future of the centre-right government is increasingly uncertain. Its attempt at radical tax reform favourable to the wealthy has, after five years in power, scarcely reached the runway; privatisation has not been worth speaking about; and its posture in matters nuclear, both civil and military, must strike Downing Street as indefensibly wimpish.

The German political landscape is more complex than that of Britain, and some of the reasons for this have been revealed by two recent elections for provincial parliaments. These provide the equivalent of by-elections (which don't occur under the German system of proportional representation), but they may be equally misleading because West Germany has a north-south divide almost as dramatic as Britain's. The old port and heavy industry areas of the north, of which Schleswig-Holstein — which polled on 8 May — is characteristic, are registering unemployment of around 15 per cent, while in the south-western state of Baden-Württemberg, which polled on 20 March, it is down to five per cent.

The Baden-Württemberg election was an assessment of the very effective state government which now acts as host to the European headquarters of IBM, Kodak, Bosch and Daimler-Benz. Minister-President Lothar Späth, heading the last non-coalition Christian Democrat (CDU) ministry in the country, still seemed in unbudgeable control, and so the election proved. The Social Democrats (SPD) vote remained below 33 per cent and following poor performances in Bavaria and Hesse in 1986/87, many still wonder whether Germany south of the Main is a lost land for the left. Without the "list" system that German proportional representation provides (directly-elected MPs are topped up from a party list until their total number is proportionate to the party's percentage vote) the whole of south Germany would return only three Social Democrat MPs to Bonn.

Omen for the left

The result of the Baden-Württemberg poll was ominous for the left in other respects. The SPD made some gains in industrial areas but still forfeited these in "service" centres like Stuttgart. Moreover, in areas of higher unemployment — industrial towns on the fringes of the Black Forest — the extreme right NPD and Republican parties were polling 7 to 9 per cent, largely on their demand for the expulsion of foreign workers.

> *'Against the "blood and iron" of Mrs Thatcher's England, German politics are creaky, slow-moving and circumspect. But the pluralism of the German political system is important, because it exposes the range of issues implicated in any political decision'*

The SPD leader in Baden-Württemberg, the 44-year-old economist Dieter Spöri, is characteristic of a new generation in the party whose experience stems as much from provincial as from Bonn politics — a faculty which the right wing put to good use during the 13 years of SPD-Liberal coalition government in Bonn, 1969-1982. Spöri's combination of high technology and environmental improvement — wooing the man in the Mercedes with worries about his children's health and environmental deterioration — ought to have been an attractive one, but Lothar Späth proved a difficult man to stop. He adopted elements of his opponents' policies (particularly on Green issues) and he announced himself as the defender of the local CDU against the ineptitudes of the Bonn coalition — a degree of licence not available to any provincial Conservative in the Thatcher Reich.

But the problems which Lothar Späth adroitly manoeuvred around still confront an ailing centre-right coalition in Bonn. Both the north-south question and the governing style of the Christian Democrats have been given particular salience by the repeated Schleswig-Holstein election. High unemployment in seaport towns and an agriculture threatened by changes in European Community subsidy gave a strong platform to the SPD under Björn Engholm, already the major party in the state. But these were dwarfed by the bizarre events of the first state election in September 1987. The threat of an SPD victory promoted the young, ambitious and embattled state-premier of Schleswig, Uwe Barschel, to launch an unwise dirty tricks campaign against Engholm. This leaked out a couple of days before the poll and Barschel, just squeaking home, fled from the investigating committee and killed himself in a hotel in Geneva. The buck did not stop with the deceased. The strong man of the CDU in Schleswig was Gerhard Stoltenberg, federal finance minister of the government in Bonn. Since then Stoltenberg has joined the many passengers of an increasingly decrepit-looking government.

Even so, no one could have predicted that Engholm's SPD would gain 54.8 per cent and the CDU only 33.3 per cent in Schleswig-Holstein last week. This will bring the north-south divide to a head in the *Bundesrat* (federal council) where the "North" (mainly SPD-run states but in this case fronted by CDU-run Lower Saxony) are pressing to have the federal government contribute more of the costs of social welfare. It will also imperil Kohl's centre-right coalition as the Free Democrats look for a life belt to prevent them sinking below the five per cent threshold, and they are expected to find it on the left. Attempts to buy them off will provoke even more unpleasantness from the ageing and erratic Franz-Joseph Strauss. The CSU leader is aware that the collection of mediocrities around him in Munich will be unable to stop his party — the focus of the German right — falling apart.

Teuto-Bennism

The CDU will then have a problem comparable with that of the SPD, which for the past few weeks has been convulsed by the "Lafontaine thesis". Oskar Lafontaine, state premier of Saarland, is, like Engholm and Spöri, another of the new generation. In 1985, heading a very left-wing party, he took control of this hitherto CDU-run state in the aftermath of severe steelworks closures, and was almost characterised as a "class war" socialist of a sort of "Teuto-Bennite" type. But in February 1988 he came out with the suggestion that the better-off workers should be prepared to settle for a shorter working week with proportionally lower salaries, in order to create new jobs for the unemployed. This won him mocking applause from the right, violently angered the trade union federation (DGB), and contributed to the SPD's problems in the Baden-Württemberg elections.

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The problem is that while Lafontaine's plan would work equitably in the state sector (and other sectors subject to public subsidy) the unions see its effect in privately-owned industry as a worker-subsidy to management to (a) invest abroad or (b) install machinery to replace yet more workers. To show that big business has not changed its spots the unions would point to the struggle of the metal-workers' union to stop Krupp Steel closing its Rheinhausen works in Duisburg. The event has achieved much the same resonance as the Upper Clyde "work-in" in 1971, and has, in particular, shown that the solidarity between German workers and Turkish and Iranian *gastarbeiters* in the north in strong contrast with the xenophobia of the richer south.

Against the "blood and iron" of Mrs Thatcher's England, German politics are creaky, slow-moving and circumspect. No wonder some German businessmen have a yen for someone who seems to have done what "Adolf" did for their forebears, without the unfortunate side-effects. But the pluralism of the German political system is important, because it exposes the range of issues implicated in any political decision. Späth's provincial economic miracle is a tribute to the success of decentralised decision-making, but it displays the costs of economic growth in the pollution threat to woods, rivers and the Alps themselves. The aftermath of the Alkem-Nukem scandal in Hesse, in which nuclear waste reprocessing firms (hitherto carefully protected by the government) were found flouting regulations and bribing officials, has further shifted Germany away from a nuclear future.

German politics lack the exciting simplicity of the direct confrontations which characterise Britain. The paradox is that it is precisely the sort of right-wing German publicist who now praises Mrs Thatcher's decisiveness who was, a couple of decades ago, lauding the consensual qualities of the Bundesrepublik.

FIRE IN MOSCOW

Can glasnost become permanent?

Last week Anthony Barnett speculated on the momentous consequences of success for Gorbachev's reforms in the Soviet Union. The key to that success, writes* AGNES HELLER, *is whether "panicked" Soviet institutions can adapt to limited forms of open political conflict

THE SINGLE undeniable achievement of Gorbachev's three-year old leadership is the politicisation of the USSR to an extent which is without precedent since the Bolshevik revolution. But neither the scathing criticism of the economy's performance nor the equally devastating official statements about the "obsolete" and "bureaucratic" ways of exercising political authority have so far led to *institutional* changes of any kind. Nor does far-reaching institutional change seem to be compatible with preserving the self-identity of the current regime.

Gorbachev has been a consistent protector of *glasnost*, but the term has a dual meaning. On the one hand, it stands for the increasing determination of those in power to disclose and submit to popular criticism facts and events which are "compromising for the dignity of the Soviet state", the like of which had in the past been systematically concealed and suppressed. On the other hand, the policy of *glasnost* represents an increasing tolerance of a "public opinion" the existence of which has always been surmised but which could not be proven.

After the massive demonstrations of Armenian nationalism in the republic's capital, Yerevan, which included an appeal to *glasnost*, there is no further need to prove that an alternative view of Soviet politics, widely divergent from the official positions, now exists, a truly "public" opinion. Moreover, the "alternative view" has ingeniously found its proper channel, with a new medium which is the substitute for, and the continuation of, the *samizdat*, the underground broadsheet. This new vehicle of self-expression is the reader's letter, now regularly published in almost all newspapers and periodicals of the Soviet Union.

To interpret this tolerance, even encouragement, lent by Gorbachev's leadership to the unruly and highly unorthodox flow of dissenting opinion as an act of political generosity would be erroneous: the leaders themselves need *glasnost*. Because the political system created by Stalin is opaque in both directions. The leaders are just as much groping in the dark when they want to fathom what is happening to the economy or how people would think about a new policy they wish to introduce, as are the proverbial "toiling masses" concerning all issues affecting their lives.

Furthermore, in the ever more intense power struggle between Gorbachev and Ligachev, the "reformers" and the "hardliners", the new leadership has to "escape into *glasnost*" from time to time by leaking confidential information on domestic opinion via the Western press, to find protection against the plots which are being hatched to overthrow Gorbachev.

Stalin's legacy

But can *glasnost* be institutionalised? This is the crucial question for the possible future of democracy in the USSR. The encouragement given by Gorbachev's team to the re-politicisation of Soviet society has allowed forces to emerge which are incompatible with the legacy of Stalin — or with the present political system. A variety of independent political actors have surfaced and they are in continuous conflict with bureaucratic officialdom, Gorbachev's main enemies, but sometimes also with Gorbachev himself. In addition, they are often at cross purposes and in collision with each other. Most of the publicly expressed views of these actors defy and erode the authority of one of Stalin's main legacies: the Soviet legal system, with its strict ban on "anti-state agitation".

Sharp, apparently irreconcilable conflicts emerge within the Communist party apparatus in which both factions appeal to their own constituency outside the leadership, even outside the party — and the latter is a flagrant violation of the Bolshevik code.

Nationalities increasingly tend to settle accounts among themselves as well as within the federal system. While this does not contradict the letter of the Soviet constitution, it certainly contradicts the spirit of the regime's functional principles.

"Society" as a whole shows unmistakable symptoms of a desire for emancipation from the political omnipotence of Stalin's creation, the totalitarian state. Can all these centrifugal trends be recognised in political structures without the regime becoming, in effect, a different regime?

If we exclude the possibility of a revolution, about which we could only speculate, there are two alternative versions of the future. One is that the present centrifugal trends will continue, and be complemented by new, as yet unforeseen, actors without institutional recognition of any kind. This would make the system dangerously unstable, which would be conducive to violent action akin to the events of the Chinese cultural revolution. Apart from its inherent dangers for the rest of the world, such instability would in all probability exhaust the whole of society, and it would either end in the restoration of neo-Stalinism or in the direct rule of the military.

But there is a second scenario which would defy our traditional views of democracy, and yet which could prove a long-term solution. It is quite possible that all the factions of the party leadership involved in bitter infighting would shy away from mutual bloodletting *a la* Stalin. They could make their disagreements public to a degree, without staging a Fronde at every juncture against the opposite faction without outside helpers. The independent political actors could keep their autonomy and their loose forms of organisation, with official tolerance but without official recognition.

At the boiling point of social and national conflicts, both sides would then appeal to the arbitration of the party leadership. If the decision is adverse to their cause, they might persist in civil disobedience, but they would refrain from civil war. "Society" would defend its autonomy in the private, religious and cultural spheres; it would continue to wage its guerrilla war against the state in matters of education, the "secondary economy" and the like. But in the main it would turn apolitical and not question the "traditional authority" which maintains domestic peace, ethnic equilibrium (with Slavic predominance), imperial unity and superpower status.

This would indeed be much less than democracy. It would also be an immense relief for the populace of the USSR, which has suffered much. And, although it would not eliminate expansionism from world politics, it would make the dimension of rational calculability (*alias* détente) permanent in it. Ultimately, a genuinely democratic system can neither be "donated" to nor foisted upon a nation. It can only be self-created.

Agnes Heller is the author with Ferenc Feher, of "The Post-Modern Political Condition", to be published by Polity Press later this year. She teaches at the New School for Social Research in New York.

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Stars in her eyes

ALEXANDER COCKBURN ***follows the Nancy's Clairvoyant Affair and more serious events in Central America***

"Have you seen, it's in the stars;
Next July we collide with Mars."
Crosby/Sinatra, *High Society*

THERE HAS BEEN a surprising commotion over the disclosure by former White House chief of staff Donald Regan that important White House decisions have been consequent upon the analysis of Joan Quigley, a soothsayer, resident in San Francisco, and that Nancy Reagan would never permit her husband to leave home without one or even two time-and-motion studies by this same soothsayer on appropriate scheduling by the commander-in-chief.

Much of the clucking is being done by people who themselves automatically turn to their favourite horoscope. The United States retains, surprisingly for an advanced industrial society, about the same per capita level of religious superstition as Bangladesh. What one of Jimmy Carter's aides once referred to as the "abracadabra vote" is ample. Nor is it news that the President is in the mainstream of popular American credulity. He has been nurtured in the same rich loam of folk ignorance, historical figment and paranormal intellectual constructs as millions of his fellow citizens, particularly in his age group.

Regan, who was formerly Secretary of the Treasury, reveals in his book that in his four years at that post he never once had a one-to-one colloquy with the chief executive and that in the devising of economic policy he was "flying by the seat of my pants". Actually he was flying under strict orders from Mission Control in the form of Federal Reserve chairman Paul Volcker, who was the effective president for most of Reagan's terms; even so there is certainly no empirical evidence available that Ms Quigley's forecasts were inferior to those analysts following more orthodox routes of economic prediction.

The image of two women, one of them peering into a crystal ball, guiding the policies of the United States is irresistible in prompting coarse calumnies on a pliant commander-in-chief's abdication of responsibility, but once again reflection prompts a more kindly analysis. For much of human history chief executives burdened with at least as many cares as Ronald Reagan have sought counsel from planets or entrails and who now chastises the Emperor Augustus for his naivety? Christian claims of "divine guidance" are too numerous and frightening for individual citation.

Again, it is legitimate to suppose that Mrs Reagan was invoking the disinterested advice of the planets to mask personal, and generally sensible maneouvres. The press, mostly men, have rejoiced in depicting Mrs Reagan as a narrow-minded shrew, blindly devoted to her husband's well-being, but Michael Deaver's memoir published last year was a useful corrective. Deaver, now encumbered like others among Reagan's aides with a criminal conviction, was Reagan's vizier for the first term and recounted how he and Mrs Reagan would plot to circumvent the ultra-rightwingers urging their mad agenda on Ron. In the same vein Regan reports that Mrs Reagan urged speedy firing of Labor Secretary Ray Donovan, who dwelt for his entire span of public service in the shadow of mob connections (as would anyone with a background in the construction industry in New York), and was equally keen for the commander-in-chief to boot out CIA chief William Casey both before and after his brain seizure.

In neither case was Mrs Reagan in error, and who will reprove her petulant cry, when demanding that a passage on abortion be cut out of a Reagan speech, that "I don't give a damn about the right-to-lifers"? She apparently had Ms Quigley draw up Mikhail Gorbachev's chart, the better to understand the prophet of *glasnost*. To judge by such examples of their work as were released at the time of Watergate, it was probably superior in penetration to the profile of the Soviet leader provided by the CIA's team of psychiatrists. It certainly seems to have persuaded Reagan that here at last was a man he could do business with. Had Mrs Reagan invoked, as backing for her admirable counsel, the traditional "woman's instinct" she probably would have got nowhere. But to her husband's credulous mind the majesty of celestial guidance was irresistible. Besides, who knows to whom Ms Quigley was talking when she had Nancy on hold?

Astrology is entirely consonant with Reaganism. The "science" is after all the negation of the moral sense, the abdication of initiative to the motion of the planets as parsed by the precise time and whereabouts of Ronald Reagan's birth. So astrology is therefore the twinkling penumbra of Reaganism's incandescent belief in the motions of the "free market", since submission to the "laws" of this same imaginary "free market" permits him to say that starving or homeless people are a consequence, admittedly unfortunate, of the free market system (that is, capitalism) but that to intervene and suggest that these same victims be fed and housed, by state subsidy if necessary, is to tinker with an inspired mechanism and court disaster.

Those crazy gringos

Awareness of the President's millenarian expectations has extended to the number one villain on the US Demon chart, Tony Noriega of Panama. In the June issue of *Vanity Fair*, T.D. Allman reports an exchange with the general. "Is it true," Allman says he asked Noriega, "that you have the Mark of the Three Sixes engraved on your skull?" Noriega permitted Allman to inspect his receding hairline and scalp and then replied:

"My name's Tony, not Damien, and I'm not the Antichrist. That senile jerk up in the White House . . is the one who's trying to unleash. . . "

Noriega couldn't think of the word he wanted, so he made a small gesture with one of his fingers, the one that had his military-class ring on it.

A fleshy man wearing a canary-yellow sport shirt and two gold chains was instantaneously at the general's elbow.

"You studied for the priesthood," Noriega said. "What's the name of the last book of the Bible?"

"The Book of Revelations, General."

"And what's the name of that big battle they have there?"

"The Battle of Armageddon, sir". . .

"The image of two women, one of them peering into a crystal ball, guiding the policies of the United States is irresistible in prompting coarse calumnies on a pliant commander-in-chief's abdication of responsibility"

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"Yes, that's it!" Noriega exclaimed. "Reagan's screwed up in El Salvador. He's screwed up in Nicaragua. He's a washed-up old loser, but he wants to go out of office with a big victory. So he's trying to unleash Armageddon on Panama."

What next for 'our thugs'?

El Salvador's 20 March elections received remarkably little attention from the American press. In 1984 Jose Napoleon Duarte's presidential victory, seen as a triumph for the Reagan administration's Central American policies, resulted in saturation coverage. But these days El Salvador has become a sideshow and takes a back seat to Nicaragua and Panama.

The American media's consensus on the election was that the vote would mean a significant turn to the right in El Salvador, that the ARENA party's convincing victory might put an end to the "reforms" carried out by Duarte and that an ARENA-led government would greatly step up the war against the guerrillas while allowing the army to ignore its American-provided human rights training.

Time magazine, in its coverage of the election on 4 April entitled "Right Turn", laid out this argument in the purest distillation of bosh. "Democracy's verdict can be harsh," wrote *Time*, "even for its friends. Jose Napoleon Duarte's ruling Christian Democratic Party, which has steered an erratic course between murderous foes on the left and the right, rediscovered that truth last week when it was roundly rejected at the ballot box." *Time* also worried that "ARENA will use its new power in the Assembly to stop investigations of human-rights abuses." Douglas Farah, in the *Washington Post*, cited "top" Christian Democrats who said that ARENA's legislative majority "will make it virtually impossible for Duarte to continue his human rights and land reform efforts on which he has staked his reputation."

> *The true power brokers in El Salvador are the army and the United States. Possibly the greatest change that has resulted from US efforts over the last seven years is that the army no longer answers to the oligarchy but to the US*

This consensus accepts the elections as legitimate and embraces every argument laid out by the Reagan administration over the past seven years in trying to sell its Salvadoran policy to the public. But the elections can in no way be interpreted as a shift in popular sentiment to the right. They were largely a rejection of Duarte and the Christian Democrats. A poll conducted before the election by the University of Central America showed that 6 per cent of the population viewed the Christian Democrats as "the party which best serves their interest"; only 19 per cent said the same about ARENA, while 79 per cent had no preference. Those Salvadorans who did vote were punishing Duarte's party for the Christian Democrats' rampant corruption during the past few years, most visibly by siphoning off most of the $1.5 million per day that the government has received since Duarte came to power.

Another reason for discontent is that the fabled economic and social "reforms" carried out by Duarte are visible only to American reporters and embassy officials. Take the agrarian reform programme, centrepiece of American strategy. The programme was never much more than a public relations ploy. Real land reform requires that large landowners not be allowed to retain great chunks of their property. In South Korea and Japan, the limit was set at 3 hectares (that is, about 7.4 acres). Cory Aquino's original land reform proposal in the Philippines established a limit of 17 hectares, and this was criticised by the World Bank as being far too high. In El Salvador, the initial limit was 150 hectares, this being revised upward to 250 hectares in 1983 which meant that less than 10 per cent of the land would be subject to redistribution. During the next four years landowners were allowed to sell off their surplus land at a pleasing profit, often to family members. Three-quarters of the peasantry remains landless.

At the same time, the economy is in one of the worst recessions in Salvadoran history. Unemployment and inflation are both running at approximately 40 per cent, with the price of corn, beans and rice all having shot up in the past year.

As for human rights violations, a March report by Americas Watch confirms that human rights abuses are on an upswing. It is true that death squad killings have fallen off from the horrifying rate of the early 1980s but now these too are rising; 14 people were found in the first two months of 1988 alone, a fact repeatedly referred to by the Reagan administration and the US press as a sign of progress.

The Watch report traces the deteriorating situation to the Christian Democrats' failure to prosecute any past human rights violations, a task at which it has proved itself "singularly inept".

One final point overlooked by the consensus makers is that the Salvadoran elections have little meaning. The true power brokers in El Salvador are the army and the United States. Possibly the greatest change that has resulted from US efforts in El Salvador over the past seven years is that the army no longer answers to the oligarchy, but to the United States. The military receives approximately half a million dollars a day in US aid, and is entirely dependent on American handouts. The Salvadoran government has never been able to convince the rich to pay anything but minuscule taxes, which means that ARENA's ability to widen the internal war can only take place if the US allows it.

The prospects for any sort of peace negotiations with the guerrillas are about nil, as they were before the elections. The army is an institutional monster outside the control of any civilian party, and has its own agenda. Peace talks are not on it, since the army is not unhappy with the current situation, nourished forever on US aid. At some point it may decide that its inability to wipe out 6,000 guerrillas in a country the size of Massachusetts represents a stain on its honour; for now, however, it is in no rush to escalate the war (nor is it clear that it would have success if it were to try; the guerrillas are active in all parts of the country and are as potent a military threat as ever).

Meanwhile, the State Department has been trying to put the best face on the election results, saying that the United States could work with ARENA, which, officials claim, has moved beyond its ugly past and is in the process of becoming a nuts-and-bolts style political party in the American tradition, "newly pragmatic", etc, etc. While the press has not yet wholly swallowed this argument, it is preparing to do so. *Time*'s article said that ARENA "in the past has been associated with right-wing death squads" and a *New York Times* article claimed that the "key question . . . would appear to be whether ARENA has outgrown its extremist origins and become a party capable of governing". In addition, numerous accounts spoke favourably of ARENA's new president, Alfredo Cristiani, who replaced Roberto d'Aubisson, denounced by former US Ambassador Robert White as a pathological killer. The US pressed the latter into resigning, since his reputation made it more difficult for the administration to get large sums of money out of Congress.

The problem of cleaning up ARENA's image will take on heightened importance over the next months, as the party has an excellent chance of winning next year's presidential election. This PR job will be successfully accomplished. Part of ARENA's facelift is the portentous build-up of Cristiani, who is frequently referred to as "a graduate of Georgetown University", a feat apparently vouchsafing him a great deal of legitimacy. Needless to say, Cristiani and the new "moderate elements" of ARENA are just as far-right as D'Aubuisson, the only difference being that they aren't officially designated killers. D'Aubuisson remains the predominant figure in the party, and is a principal spokesperson inside El Salvador. It's a demanding task, but the "new ARENA" will be with us soon. □

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ESSAY

Ghosts at the feast for Israel's birthday celebration

As Jews across the world join in the celebration of Israel's first forty years this week, **COLIN SHINDLER** *gives a personal account of the ambivalence of many British Jews towards the homeland*

AT A TIME when British Jews are commemorating the considerable achievements of Israel's first forty years, some are haunted by the frozen frames of warring children and burning barricades in the Gaza slums. There is the uneasy knowledge that the most advanced military force in the Middle East is using clubs. Truly, the age of innocence is over.

In 1948, Israel was created and governed by men and women of vision and ideals. Can the same be said today? A few years ago, a book was published entitled *Ben Gurion and the Intellectuals: Power, Knowledge and Charisma:* could one substitute the name of Shamir or Rabin without prompting a sarcastic guffaw? The "iron fist" mentality is indicative of the low calibre of leadership in Israel today. The party structure and system has permitted the rule of the mediocrities.

Shortly after the victory of the Six Day war, a group of 200 Israeli academics warned that the annexation of the newly conquered territories would eventually destroy democracy in one of the few multi-party states in the Middle East. Twenty years on no coherent policy has emerged to deal with the territories. It is manifestly absurd to maintain military rule over a million Palestinians as if it were a well thought-out recipe for harmony and stability. The reality is that it has had a corrosive and divisive effect on Israeli society and has created an unjust system of double standards for Jews and Arabs. The occupation has radicalised many young Palestinians who have no memory of the harsh and corrupt Jordanian occupation before 1967. Young Israelis, on the other hand, are increasingly attracted to demagogues on the growing radical right like Rabbi Meir Kahane who preach the ominous policy of "population transfer".

Independence Day, 14 May 1948: the State of Israel is created and governed by men and women of vision and ideals. Can the same be said today? Camera Press

> *'The occupation of the West Bank enhanced Israel's sense of security, but it also challenged a fundamental tenet of Jewish experience — that the Jews were history's underdogs who make common cause with the downtrodden, the disenfranchised, the persecuted. The leaders of the Palestinian uprising understand this only too well. . .'*

The racism of the right is fuelled by indisputable demographic trends. By the year 2000, there will be as many twenty-year-old Arabs as Jews in Eretz Israel Ha'shlema (Greater Israel). There were 81,000 Arab births in 1985 compared to 75,000 Jewish ones. These facts lead liberals to believe that the only option left to the Israeli government is withdrawal from the occupied territories. Without it, the fabric of Israeli society will crumble. To the emerging right, the solution may simply be the mass expulsion of thousands of Palestinians.

Challenging history

There's no doubt that the occupation of the West Bank enhanced Israel's sense of security, but it also challenged a fundamental tenet of Jewish experience — that the Jews were history's underdogs who make common cause with the downtrodden, the disenfranchised, the persecuted. The leaders of the Palestinian uprising understand this only too well. By abandoning the gun for the stone, they have distanced themselves from the terrorism of long-departed PLO chieftains. They have donned the mantle of the underdog and branded the Israelis as the tyrants.

The experience of history has taught Jews to regard themselves as victims. It is part of their collective memory. At Passover when the story of

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the exodus from Egypt is recalled, fathers tell their children that they must not regard it as a mere fairy tale but treat it as if they themselves had been brought forth from the House of Bondage unto freedom. For many Jews, to regard oneself as an oppressor is a negation of Jewish tradition.

This, I believe, is at the root of the Jewish dilemma today: how to ensure Israel's security but still remain true to the ideal of a just society. Since 1982, the consensus of support within Anglo-Jewry for official Israeli government policies has broken down. The debacle of the invasion of Lebanon divided supporters of Israel into doves and hawks. The turning point for many British Jews came with the revelation of the massacre of Palestinians by Israel's Christian Phalangist allies in Lebanon at Sabra and Shatila refugee camps. Sharon's adventure which cost thousands of Jewish and Arab lives forced Jews outside Israel to think about the homeland in terms of public reality rather than public relations. To be pro-Israel no longer meant to be pro-Israel's government. This was keenly felt by many Jews in America who conceded that it was actually better for Israel that Jews should speak out against bad policies than maintain an embarrassed silence.

Unlike American Jewry which is one group in a country of immigrants, Jews in Britain are an ethnic minority in a "Christian" majority culture. With the experience of centuries of persecution, the best policy for survival was always deemed to be one of anglicisation and to stay on the margins of society. Jewish leaders here were not expected to give a Jewish dimension on the crucial issues of the day, but only to act as *shtadlanim* (court Jews) to the government. They sought and represented a consensus of Jewish opinion on matters ranging from the prosecution of war criminals to the safeguarding of *shchita* (ritual slaughter).

Israeli government policies were generally supported up to 1967, but the future of the territories, the antics of the settlers, Lebanon and now Gaza have caused a schism. Even so the official line still reflects the government coalition of political opposites, but is tempered with a policy of "say nothing, do nothing" on the more unpalatable events. Thus the Board of Deputies of British Jews, the representative body of synagogues and organisations, unlike the American Jewish Congress, has no policy on the future of the territories and there is no mechanism within the community for representing different opinions.

The Chief Rabbi, recently carried on the wings of Thatcherism to the House of Lords, has proved the exception. Although I disagree with much of his political outlook, on Israel he is a notorious dove, supporting the religious peace movement, *Netivot Shalom* (Paths to Peace). His comments over the years have infuriated the messianic nationalists in Israel. On one occasion, Israel's hawkish and fundamentalist former Chief Rabbi Shlomo Goren called upon British Jews to "spew this dangerous man from our midst". In the present crisis, he has exhorted Jews in Britain to support moderate opinion in Israel. Together with the philosopher Sir Isaiah Berlin, he has embraced the idea of "exchanging land for peace" by supporting the Shultz plan.

Hitler's posthumous victory

Most older Jews in Britain still bear the guilt of the fortunate — the Nazi invaders came perilously close. The trauma of the *Shoah* (the Holocaust) has cast its long shadow over Jewish policy-making and those who lived through that dark period are excessively cautious. For those who were touched by the anti-semitism of the English upper classes, the political right and Mosley's fascist movement, this is the inevitable outcome. However, it has also stifled non-conformist views and any sense of innovation. For that generation, to criticise the Gaza events is a betrayal of the pledge made at the gates of Bergen-Belsen: "Never again". The destruction of the past is hindering the construction of a future. This is Hitler's posthumous victory.

Many Jews feel unwelcome on the left today. Jews feel hesitant about revealing their Jewishness or debunking absurd comparisons between Nazi Germany and present-day Israel. Anti-Zionism may not be anti-semitism in the majority of cases but, clumsily expressed, many Jews perceive it as such

People like me, from the post-war generation, have a different outlook. We absorbed our sensitivity to the Holocaust through books, films, educational visits and first-hand accounts from survivors. We did not breathe in the stench of the death camps through incarceration, liberation or observation. This generation's judgment is naturally coloured by the past — it cannot be otherwise for a Jew — but it is more selective in its choice of symbols. It would, for example, have challenged Menachem Begin when he spoke of Arafat in his "Bunker" in 1982. For us, criticism of the bad policies of an inept government is a sign of commitment to the state of Israel, not disengagement.

Many independent Jewish groups have blossomed in recent years because their ideas and approaches could not be accommodated within the formal framework of the community. Jewish writers and intellectuals in particular have been outspoken in the present crisis. They published a statement in the *Jewish Chronicle* in February under the heading "Jews for a Just Israel". The statement condemned the occupation and called on the government of Israel to revive the spirit of the Camp David Accords which recognised "the legitimate rights of the Palestinian people and their just requirements". Virtually every major Jewish writer signed, including Harold Pinter, Anita Brookner, Arnold Wesker, Dan Jacobson and Gabriel Josipovici. Moreover, many ordinary members of the community have expressed highly critical views in the letters' column of the *Jewish Chronicle*.

This debate has been conducted within Anglo-Jewry. The official leadership does not wish to wash its so-called dirty linen in public. And although the independent Israeli press itself publishes damning indictments of government policy and action, many severe critics of that policy in Britain, while they will write a condemnatory letter to the *Jewish Chronicle*, would baulk at the prospect of appearing in the *New Statesman* or the *Guardian*. The rationale is that critical views on Israel have often been distorted and that such misrepresentation inevitably strengthens the hands of those who view all reports except the most sycophantic as evidence of press bias.

There is a pointed desire from some journalists to force Jews to criticise one another which goes beyond the realms of natural debate — perhaps because of a dislike of the otherness of Jews. There is an almost evangelical wish to push Jews to prostrate themselves before the truth of the PLO. While many Jews realise that the PLO as a symbol represents the nationalist aspirations of the Palestinians and the PLO are the probable future negotiating partners of the Israelis, they do not regard them as political innocents. Conversely, neither do critical Jews accept the demonology that suggests that every Palestinian is a potential terrorist.

A third area of reticence is that many Jews feel unwelcome on the left today. Jews feel hesitant about revealing their Jewishness or debunking absurd comparisons between Nazi Germany and present-day Israel (a refrain from the far left as well as the far right). Anti-Zionism may not be anti-semitism in the majority of cases, but, clumsily expressed, many Jews perceive it as such. In addition the feeling that Jews are powerful, people of influence and money, still lingers. The whispers about the number of Jews in Thatcher's government or involved in the Guinness affair is a case in point.

Perhaps history will record that the Gaza riots marked the period when the international Jewish community, the Diaspora, began to rouse itself from the numbing legacy of the Holocaust. If not, then it will continue in its role as a rotten borough of each prime minister of Israel. And most important, it will have abrogated its duty to participate in the search for a just peace between Israel and the Palestinians. As Rabbi Simeon ben Eleazar commented some 1800 years ago: "If a person sits at home, and keeps silent, how can this be considered as pursuing peace in Israel between each and every person? Rather leave home and roam throughout the world in pursuit of peace in Israel. As it is said 'Seek peace and pursue it'."

Colin Shindler is editor of The Jewish Quarterly and represents his synagogue on the Board of Deputies of British Jews.

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Books

Radio Times Hulton Picture Library

The passion and the life

EMMA GOLDMAN, *anarchist revolutionary, paused only in 1926 to scribble the turbulent record of her battles (republished in Britain this week).*
SARAH BENTON *strides through the smoke, the emotion and the contradictions*

EMMA GOLDMAN'S ACTS, thoughts and feelings career out of the pages of **Living My Life** (Pluto, 2 vols, £7.95each) with the turbulence of the times she lived in.

They seem utterly remote from our own where idealistic passion is a spent force and "revolution" is used to mean workers voting Tory to flatten the voice of protest. Yet — as we are remembering in the bereaved tributes to 1968, as a retrospective on the Black outbursts of 1981 would show, as Lenin acknowledged and the French Communist Party did not — anarchism is an essential part of any revolt. If Emma Goldman's anarchist times speak of a distant world, her quest for personal liberation, for beauty and culture, and her hostility to "mechanistic", impersonal socialism can be reclaimed by this generation.

Emma was a born-again anarchist. Her new life began a century ago, between the conviction of eight Chicago anarchists for a bomb blast that killed several policemen on 4 May 1886, and her arrival in New York three years later, aged 20. At a meeting to protest the "martyrdom" of the men — five were sentenced to death — she is transported by the speaker who calls her over and says, "I never saw a face that reflected such a tumult of emotions as yours. You must be feeling the impending tragedy closely." In a trembling voice, Emma replies, "I do feel the case in every fibre." She goes on feeling politics through her fibres, recording them in a language that is curiously redolent of Christian apostolic suffering. It is the "martyrdom" of arrested anarchists, the "Calvary" of those enduring illness or prison, which again and again recharge her zeal and sustain her faith.

Emma herself was born a Russian Jew. She followed her loved older sister to America when she was 15, left her family to join the Cause (it never lacks its capital C) when she was 20, was imprisoned and pursued by the police more times than the reader can keep track of. She follows her life-long friend Alexander Berkmann — Sasha — when he is deported to Russia in 1919 (they spend the boat trip organising deportees and guards), leaves Russia in despair at the turn of the revolution two years later, travels, settles in Britain, marries a Welsh miner, looks tiredly at the British General Strike in 1926 and, on the tenth day, decides there is nothing she can do to help bring down the British government. She hops on a plane to St Tropez where she finally sits down to write her memoirs. And at almost 1,000 pages they demand of the reader the same unflagging enthusiasm which she brought to that long, active, passionate life.

Emma's book is not a conscious record of anarchist history. She has no sense of how it is formed by a particular time or place or social group. It is not until the end of the first volume that she reveals in passing that her spoken English is poor and she has been addressing all her meetings in Yiddish. The sense of the anarchists as a marginal, dispossessed, emigré group comes in whisps through the solid chunks of her tale. So too does the sense of a USA developing the forces that will keep socialist and anarchist voices on the fringe. Police, private security agencies, "citizens' action" and vigilante groups all systematically use degrees of violence which were uncommon in Britain. Arriving in London in 1895, she comments in astonishment on the "British habit" of the right to assemble with "no display of armed force". Another quaint part of English Heritage.

Violence is at the heart of Emma's story and yet this is where she seems most locked in her own narrow vision. She is wholly silent on black people, the South and their struggles; for all the sensitive fibres of her passions, she assimilates nothing of the experience of slavery or white racism. Her only

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contact with black people is in prison. And she seems to have no qualms about the key symbolic act of anarchists: the assassination, or *attentat*.

The assassination bears witness to both the wickedness of the order upheld by the victim and to the faith of the assassin. This gives us "martyr", Emma's most used word, which in its original Greek means "witness". The political feeling which is peculiar to people in radical struggle is that through their acts they must bear witness to their beliefs and be prepared to suffer for them, usually through the punishment inflicted by authority. "In our country, the individual knows that the glorious period in which it has befalled him to live is one of sacrifice," wrote Che Guevara, whose martyred face is the icon of Cuba. (She toys with psychologistic explanations of political feeling; but the snippets of her childhood which she weaves, rather clumsily, into her tale are all testament to the punitive violence of both her parents.)

Punishment is Sasha's martyrdom. While he, Emma and an ex-lover are running a booming ice-cream parlour (she's a great entrepreneur) in New England, they hear of the Carnegie steel strike. Dropping their ice-creams they hurtle off to do something. Sasha decides to kill Carnegie's manager, Henry Clay Frick. Emma is tormented at her exclusion from his solitary act. Sasha gets three bullets into Frick and, felled by guards, still manages to stick a dagger in his thigh. Frick survives. Sasha is hauled off to spend the next 14 years in prison. The workers, on whose behalf this *attentat* is carried out, believe that Sasha is an agent of the employers who has deliberately botched his job in order to win sympathy for Frick.

Emma does not notice the irony. She is enraged that so few value Sasha's sacrifice and is driven to despair by the denunciation of his act by another ex-lover, Johannes Most. She publicly horsewhips him across the face, a face which she has once gently cradled for it is deeply and humiliatingly disfigured. She cannot forgive Most's betrayal; the anarchist movement splits again and she remains true to Sasha and his Calvary.

It is while Sasha is in gaol that Emma emerges as a woman in her own right and not an apostle for powerful men (the role which that equally powerful propagandist, Harriet Martineau, also adopted). On her own, in fact, she seems more drawn to drama than politics (in her language, all politics is despicable).

It is the Russian Revolution which calls her away and she stresses, with passion, how much she wanted to share in that revolution, however much she mistrusted parties. As she stumbles across famine, well-fed party members, bureaucracy, punitive killings, she learns how frail the anarchist imperative to liberation is beside the overriding rule of "revolutionary necessity". It is the one authority she cannot survive, not least because she is almost alone on the left in her rejection of such "necessity".

It is unlikely that anything beyond the liberating outburst of revolt would have satisfied Emma Goldman. She never speculates on what form of state could have fed the masses and protected the revolution. But don't read the book — it's a marvellous read — to find considered alternatives to socialist orthodoxy. Read it for her sharp eye and ear for human drama and absurdities, to find out what it means always to do battle on the fringes of society and to survive, integrity intact.

The Prince pops up in SoHo

Nigel Fountain

Loft Living: Culture and Capital in Urban Change
SHARON ZUKIN *Radius* £8.95

AT THE TURN of the 1970s I joined marches around Islington, protesting about the gentrification of that London borough and the ousting of the old working class residents. We had what I thought was a rather witty line, which we chanted to the tune of the contemporary Pepsodent jingle: "You'll wonder where your tenants went, when you buy your home from Odgers and Brent". I should add that I've changed the name of the estate agents to protect the innocent. No one was really guilty of course; it was the market forces. No one worries about the tenants anymore. They've gone now.

Around the same time I wrote a magazine article about the artists who had moved into the wide open warehouse spaces at St Katherine's Dock, next to Tower Bridge. They were painting and making inflatables. It was a wonderful place, they said. They've gone now.

And while completing reading this book, I noticed that Prince Charles had been talking to British and American businessmen about deprivation and the quality of life, which he reckons is really going to matter. "There could be", he added, "a slight reaction to the frenetic pace of competitive life."

The Prince pops up in Zukin's book. A 1980 ad for "spectacular lofts" in New York's "SoHo: historic district" includes the information that the 1860 building was "specially inspected by the Prince of Wales on his visit to the United States." Poor Prince Charles, he too becomes part of the flow of market forces, sucked into the frenetic pace of competitive life.

The backbone of *Loft Living* is the tale of how the small factories of Manhattan, clustered on the periphery of Greenwich Village, became homes and workspaces for artists at first. Between 1968 and 1971, the area was given a name, SoHo, taken from its location south of Houston Street. By 1976 it had been joined by NoHo (north of Houston Street) and by Tribeca, the triangular area below Canal Street and just above the Big Rich of Wall Street. The Big Rich are an important part of this

Some excellent dreams

Tony Grist

Some excellent dreams — I hardly have them now —
You hate to wake from. Once, as I remember,
A red-haired girl climbed from an upstairs window
And ran to me, for we were in some fix
Of a Secret Service kind, which only heightened
The instant of embrace. I see her clearly
And though she had no independent life
Her image means as much as anyone's
I knew when I was fifteen or whatever.
This used to bother me. I thought, "If dreams
Can feel like actual life what guarantee
Secures the real? Supposing I wake up
To find that all the things that make me happy
Are over, that they're all as dead as Christmas
After you've balled the wrapping paper up
And burned it?" I was right, because it happens.
Marriage, faith, my status in the world
All went — and numbed, I took my chance with you.
But now I'm cautious; what I'd like to say
Is that love lasts forever, that we've searched
Half of our lives and what at length we've found
Is the true, unsmashable diamond. That's the theory,
But all departures from a safe routine
Scare me to death, as if our life together —
This house we're doing up, our making love,
Our fund of understanding and our jokes
Were crushable as the brilliant, silvered glass
Of an ornament for a Christmas tree. We watched
Les Visiteurs du Soir. Beside their fountain
And after all the hazards they've surmounted
The devil turns those lovers into stone —
And yet their hearts keep beating. All he can do
Is thrash them with a branch. Prévert and Carné
Defied the Germans when they made a film
Which says that no ingenious cruelty
Can turn the human spirit once it's chosen
What it shall love. I want that to be true.

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book, with the artists — or artists manqué — acting as surrogates for others; elite real estate developers, the patrician elite of Rockefellers and Lindsays (with Prince Charles perhaps as a co-opted member) and smaller developers. The artists might like to see themselves as pioneers, in an area once labelled (1962) the "wastelands of New York" or "Hell's Hundred Acres", fighting to preserve the Victorian environment, but their self-image was mythological. What was real was rational, and what was rational was real estate. Look, suggests Zukin, at the *investors*, not the consumers.

Artists had shared parts of the lofts with the small manufacturers since the 1930s at least, but by the 1960s their businesses were in decline. It was a process hastened by zoning laws operated by the patricians and others to speed them on their way. As they declined, eager developers dreamed of new high-rises and apartments, but as real industry was ousted, so the beauty of the cast-iron buildings could be appreciated by those embarrassed by real factories, complete with their sometimes coarse and ethnic workers and bosses. It became SoHo and cute.

Thus did the artists moving in find new allies. The metropolis had supplanted Paris as the global art capital. Art was good for American ideology and good for business. "Slash and burn" development met with resistance from artist and patrician alike. Artists burrowing into the locality raised the tone and boosted nearby property values too. In time, of course, as regulations sagged under market pressures, the artists could find themselves supplanted like the manufacturers before them. Boutiques arrived; so did those seeking a sophisticated inner city lifestyle: even Saatchi and Saatchi set up their New York base north of Tribeca.

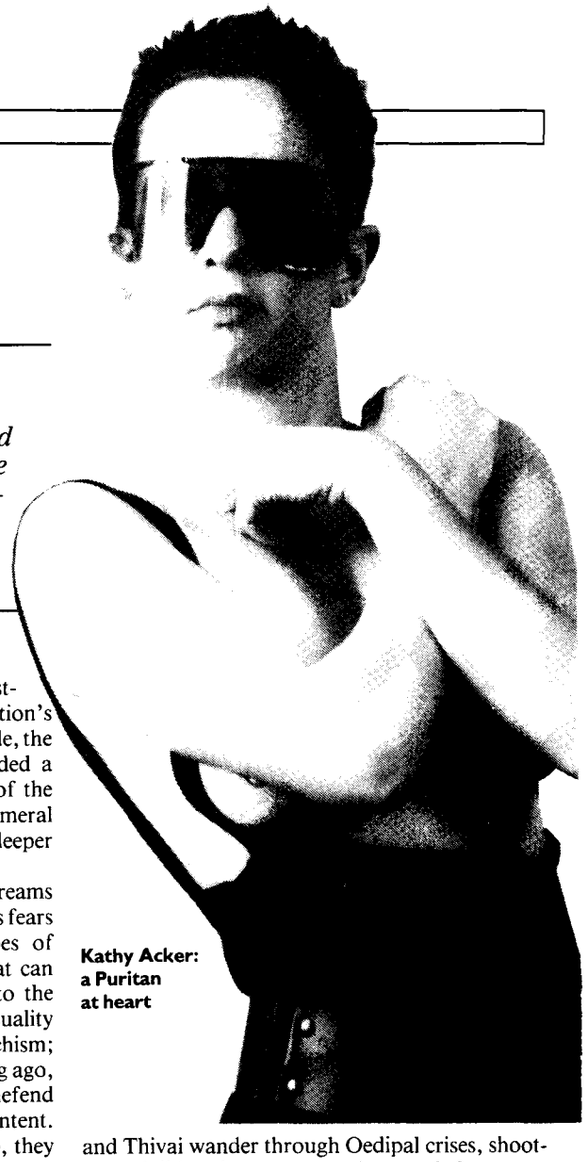
What the author provides is a painstaking analysis of how investment operates in a time and place of deindustrialisation. Thus do the loft-dwellers, few in number, become a symbol of larger social forces operating around the market: changing positions, broadening alliances, pressing on the local state, making money and, partly in return for cheap arts patronage, winning the city. Like an archaeologist, Zukin sifts the soil, identifying the layers of privilege and the hierarchies of investment, with local groups desperately clinging on and often falling off. Some learn, a little late. The Latin population of the East Village, she notes, are resisting city plans to establish subsidised artists' housing. They prefer the drug dealers who do little to boost property values.

This is a formidable book, daunting sometimes in its detail about New York, but in its specificity it also says plenty about other places. There were no mid-town lofts in London, but, despite a vigorous local campaign in Covent Garden, now there is Thatcherville. New York's local authority *may* have been more malleable than the Greater London Council to the pressures of the market and now there is the London Residuary Body. There was Nelson Rockefeller's Urban Development Corporation pumping public funds into private purses; there are Michael Heseltine's London and Liverpool docklands versions. Victoriana replaces Victorian enterprise; manufacturing dwindles; tourism flourishes. David Owen occupies a sailmaker's Limehouse cottage; Class War paints anti-yuppy slogans on the wall; Prince Charles does his best, but the market does the rest. □

Acts of profane rebellion

Boyd Tonkin

Like suicide, fiction publishing has noticeable annual peaks: one in the autumn, pre-Booker; the other round about now. So in this week's issue we explore its more dangerous ranges — prose and poetry — beginning with **KATHY ACKER***'s "The Empire of the Senseless"*



Kathy Acker: a Puritan at heart

CAN YOU DISCUSS Kathy Acker with no more than a single reference to punk and post-modernism? Let's try. Aided by her fiction's manifest debt to the fashions of the last decade, the American writer and performer has founded a vigorous minor cult among the remnants of the British avant-garde; look beyond the emphemeral fixes of the book scene, though, and a deeper pattern begins to emerge.

A culture in headlong flight from its own dreams of freedom craves scandal as a memento of its fears and desires. Acker's Bosch-like landscapes of apocalypse mirror the climate of dread that can push a monstrosity such as Clause 28 onto the statute books. In her work you find no sensuality without slaughter; no passion without masochism; no pleasure without punishment. Not so long ago, bishops used to stand in witness boxes to defend banned novels as fundamentally Puritan in intent. If it comes to that again (and it well might), they would, in Acker's case, be dead right.

Romantics and Surrealists have often seen writing itself as an act of profane rebellion: as graffiti scrawled over the painted face of a corrupt order. Acker knows this tradition, takes it very seriously and gives it a contemporary voice: "Literature is that which denounces and slashes apart the repressing machine at the level of the signified." Under this banner, raw terror and obscenity become tokens of a struggle towards feeling and meaning in a benumbed world. In her hands, the results of this commitment may not look pretty; they do have a precise logic and history.

Empire of the Senseless (Picador, £10.95) offers a plot of sorts, though the story's past and present merge into a series of discrete tableaux. Its two narrators, the male Thivai and female Abhor, drift, scrap and screw across the blasted cities of the future. The setting sports some familiar sf insignia. High-tech surveillance from a quasi-fascist regime combines with feudal squalor and underclass revolt. This décor now gives the reader/spectator instant signposts in any media. It pervades the Hollywood futurism of a film like *Blade Runner* as much as the standard menu of Acker's literary parent, William S. Burroughs.

Acker cranks this machinery into motion *con brio*. She weaves a terrorist conspiracy against the CIA data-bank into an Algerian *putsch* that takes over Paris (a fantasy shared with M. Le Pen). As usually happens when learned authors filch pop genres, heavyweight erudition blends with self-conscious primitivism. Together and alone, Abhor and Thivai wander through Oedipal crises, shoot-outs, jail-breaks, porn routines and fragments from a host of other junk narratives.

A strange motif of pirates and sailors predominates. As in early Brecht, they become both exemplars of free-booting capitalism and a gross affront to it. Elsewhere, a vision of the revolt of Islam against the Christian West extends even to the text itself, which erupts into untranslated Arabic script from time to time. Take away the futuristic hardware and any absinthe-soaked *poète maudit* might feel quite at home among Acker's repertoire of exotica. Not much has changed since Eliot inventoried Baudelair: "Prostitutes, mulattoes, Jewesses, serpents, cats, corpses." With its orphans, waifs and buccaneers, its secrets, quests and perils, the novel also reads like some delirious re-run of a children's classic: *Swallows and Amazons*, maybe, re-made by Pier Paolo Pasolini.

Behind these props, Acker gnaws away at questions of meaning, representation, gender and sexual identity. In paraphrase, Acker's method can resemble a beginners' guide to semiotics (her latest title echoes Barthes in Japan — the empire of signs — as well as Oshima's celluloid lovers in ecstasy). But her blocks of theory, quite literally, fall apart at the seams. Split by the lurches and plunges of the story, they disperse through the novel like shrapnel through flesh. What remains is a dizzying quick-step through the lumber room of high and mass culture. With ideas, allusions and bleeding chunks of plot spliced at speed, the total effect recalls a print version of scratch video. In this domain, everything signifies; but nothing refers.

Arabic art (as in Michel Tournier's *The Golden*

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Droplet) throws up one critique of this overload of empty signs. So do the fleshly inscriptions made by the tattoist: "both a defamatory brand and a symbol of a tribe or of a dream."

Wrestling with a man-made language, Acker takes up an ambiguous stance in relation to the notions of *écriture feminine*, womanly writing, that haunt all her fiction. In the earlier *Don Quixote: which was a dream*, the female knight's gender renders her speechless: "All she could do was read male texts which weren't hers." Yet Acker's persona as a novelist rests on a drive to appropriate boys' talk and boys' stories. She talks tough and she talks dirty; here, she snitches sf and semiology out of the tool-box. Does this letter from Abhor sound like an endorsement or a burlesque of the school of Hélène Cixous and Julia Kristeva? "Everytime I talk to one of you, I feel like I'm taking layers of my own epidermis, which are layers of still freshly bloody scar tissue, black brown and red, and tearing each one of them off so more and more of my blood shoots into your face. That is what writing is to me as a woman."

With orientalism, female authorship and the power of stories as strands that bind her lurid patchwork together, it comes as no surprise that Acker claims for her own the tale of Shahra'zad, "which lasted one thousand and one nights, which staved off death, which staved off patriarchy". Like the reprieved queen's, her banquet of sensations hints at some underlying pathos and jeopardy. Stop the yarn and the thread of life may snap.

Empire of the Senseless signs off with a startlingly funny sequence in which Abhor on a motorbike plays havoc with the traffic when she tries to adhere to the Highway Code. That semanticist's test-case of a rule-governed system leads straight to chaos and confusion. "Disobeying rules is the same as following rules," she concludes, "cause it's necessary to listen to your own heart."

Acker has a remarkable ear for the technical excess and emotional death of modernity. She smashes the codes and attends to the heart. No wonder romantic English literati adore her, through all the blood and the guts. But she may soon start to tire of her own mannerisms.

We should be patient. It took J. G. Ballard over 20 years of toil on the wilder shores of fantasy before he was able to create one of the great realist texts of this generation in *Empire of the Sun* (another Japanese echo? it also tells of innocence adrift among indecipherable cruelties). In time, perhaps, the death of a minor cult will mean the birth of a major novelist. □

Time's the whole sentence

Robert Sheppard

Wormwood
KEN SMITH *Bloodaxe* £4.95
Final Demands
PETER READING *Secker* £5
The Daylight Moon
LES A. MURRAY *Carcanet* £6.95
The Player Queen's Wife
OLIVER REYNOLDS *Faber* £8.95 & £3.95
Going Home to Russia
PAUL DURCAN *Blackstaff* £4.95

BOTH KEN SMITH'S **Wormwood** and Peter Readings' *Final Demands* have publishers' blurbs which assert that their authors are writing on the "frontline" of contemporary British society.

Smith's street wisdom is shown in the compelling harshness of the poetry, phrase jammed against phrase without ornament or qualification.

In Reading's writing, the dispersal and fragmentation of text into broken narratives and deleted and variant writings offer a sparse polyphony for the reader to re-assemble.

The nightmare that haunts Smith's excellent volume is that of imprisonment and being condemned to "time" in a number of senses. Smith, for two years writer-in-residence at Wormwood Scrubs, confronts and prises open the "closed worlds" of some of the inmates; but, he notes, there are others:

> whose eyes I don't meet,
> hands I don't shake, one that cut
> NF in a man's back and left him
> choke on his testicles, the knife
> still in him and ran with the video.

They have their stories ("the night whispers") and their evasiveness towards those stories: they can agree *"I was responsible"* abstractly, but not admit the details of their "crimes". But, most tellingly, there are the evasions of time in habit: "Time is the crease in his pants I think,/ pressed as in the army under the mattress." A Scrubs graffito sums up time's irreducible, imponderable relation to imprisonment: "Time is what/Time is."

It is not just the rare privilege of this documentary that makes this book so impressive, but the way that Smith carries the prison walls with him when he writes about London, with the polymorphous urban paranoia that he has made his own in earlier volumes. The sheer compaction of the details in the intricate sequence, "As it happens" — the voices heard through breeze-blocks, the spraycan's *"this is white man's land"*, doors opening on "blue video voices", and wind through the tower block's airshaft — suggest imprisonment. As the narrator's desires become co-mingled with the prison and the city, time is a subjective index of dependence and death:

> *All this is prison.* Myself I want
> to be me and be useful and not be
> where I'm somebody's social problem
> and time's the whole sentence.

Such moments, which amount to atheist prayer, appear in Reading's enjoyable **Final Demands** too: "I tug a bifurcate bone with my daughter, win, and, in secret,/wish *When I rattle my clack, may she not too deeply grieve*".

Reading ambivalently shares Smith's frontline: "25 yards away, there is a bleak brick aerosolled dead-end — LONG LIVE THE POPE/ORANGE SHIT lividly sprayed emerald." Yet this comes from a passage teasingly deleted, as if to say that that which is inadequate as literary discourse still demands to be read. The text offers variants, as in the clever substitution of "Four million" for "three hundred" years "of intractable nitwits' blathersome humbug".

Unfortunately, there are moments where a verbal pomposity, as well as a lack of political sensitivity, show through the contrived casualness.

Time doubly dominates the book because the narrator's personal life is measured against narratives of other times, from Victorian fiction and letters (containing "bad" poetry) to World War Two correspondence and military reports. The text's *donnée* claims to be the finding of a "long box of letters whose dead scribes correspond with us still", the pun on "correspond" signalling historical parallels which attempt to unite the texts: a 24-year-old's "very severe conflict with her last enemy Death" in 1859 is read against a contemporary ten-year-old "bald as a pawn (unkind chemotherapy)". Poetry fails such suffering, with its "tender inadequate

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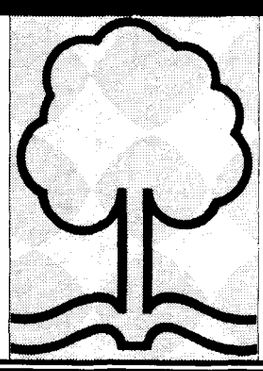
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barbs", even when it deliberately pluralises its discourses. The presence of death shadows the book as its ultimate deletion. "Oh let us prepare for our last moments," prays the Victorian; "pox on all quacks who won't prescribe knock-out drops . . . to us glum terminals," curses the modern man.

Any contemporary poet who dedicates his work "To the glory of God", as does Australian poet Les A. Murray with **The Daylight Moon**, might be thought to be lacking in self-irony.

But Murray *is* able to take an ironical look at himself — one who's left "Yuppie City", as he says in a verse letter, to return to the north coast where he had grown up, and about which he reminisces. However, his attempts at religious poetry are embarrassing, as when an imitative bat-language affirmatively squeaks, *"A rare ear, our aery Yahweh."* He can turn his ear to good use, in simulating the illiterate pleadings of a scrounger to a competition winner, for example: *"mate if your interested in a fellow diggers problems/old mate a friend in need"*. Australian history and heritage abound, often in narrative poems I found intermittently dull; but this is a timely publication in bicentennial year.

Oliver Reynolds' second collection, **The Player Queen's Wife**, has mostly the look of a collection of exercises, with the exception of the achieved "Rorschach Writing", whose 12 poems ingeniously piece together like a detective story.

Throughout, Reynolds maintains a restrained sense of mystery, the setting for the sequence eventually revealing itself to be a sanitorium. But unlike *Final Demands*, with its more open narrative sense, this mystery closes as firmly as the sanitorium doors:

> Doorknobs bend a dotted line
> to its vanishing-point,
> brass winks relayed through unused air.

Such careful imagery, however finely devised, seems a little too artificial after the locked doors of *Wormwood*.

By contrast Paul Durcan's poetry is chattily banal. In reading **Going Home to Russia** I felt I was in the company of some unstoppable raconteur, spewing capricious speculations, second-hand witticisms and re-cycled jokes. This is, of course, what many people want from poetry: poetry with the poetry taken out. The poems skate across their social surfaces (usually Durcan's native Ireland) with a contrived simple diction and with a formulaic approach to subject matter which ensures that he can churn them out — the book is 102 pages long — on related themes.

There are several satires on Irish Catholicism, such as "Cardinal Dies of Heart Attack in Dublin Brothel" and "Priest Accused of Not Wearing Condom", which seem to have been written from such a depth of repression that the tickle of this blasphemy can excite laughter. His poems on Russia, in the final section of the book, at least adopt some of the same strategies to a more exotic subject matter. □

Robert Sheppard's forthcoming booklet, "Letter from the Blackstock Road", is published by Oasis.

Remembrance of things past

Richard Deveson

The Town Park and Other Stories
HERMANN GRAB trans. QUINTIN HOARE *Verso* £10.95

HERMANN GRAB'S name is not in any of the reference books and his life is a tantalising, perhaps tragic, might-have-been. He was born in 1903, a member of almost the last generation to grow to maturity within the German-speaking, assimilated Jewish bourgeoisie of Prague: younger than Rilke and Kafka, just old enough to remember the grey years of war and the collapse of the Habsburg monarchy. He was a highly talented musician, who counted Theodor Adorno, George Szell and Rudolf Serkin among his friends.

In 1940 he emigrated to New York, after desperate difficulties in Vichy France and Portugal. His mother, like so many others from their world, perished in Poland. Grab published one short novel in Europe before the war, but in the struggle for health and survival in America, he found it hard to produce more than a few further stories and fragments. He died in 1949.

The Town Park, the short novel, had been highly praised by Max Brod, Klaus Mann, Hermann Broch and Walter Benjamin in the 1930s, but until the present collection was issued in Germany in 1985, Grab had virtually been forgotten. *The Town Park* is set in Prague in 1915-16 and is a story of a boy's first glimpses of the world through the parting mists of adolescence. Renato is sensitive, artistic, a little spoilt. He has piano lessons and fencing lessons, a brisk English governess and a neurasthenic mother who spends much of the time wilting on the sofa. There is a lot of autumnal twilight and ticking of clocks in darkened rooms. The early poems of Hofmannsthal and Eliot, *Le Grand Meaulnes* — that is the sort of atmosphere evoked — though the immediate and powerful influence on the writing is undoubtedly Proust. What happens in the story (an episode of envy, loss and failure) is less important than Grab's attempt to catch barely describable moments of adolescent inner experience: glimmerings of intensity, inklings of mysteriousness that fade into banality, a sense of the illusoriness of life. One of the obvious dangers of such writing is preciousness and Grab doesn't always hold out against it, but the self-pity is kept well at bay and many of the moments are very finely realised.

It is a later group of stories about fascism, emigration and exile that I found more impressive. (Granted, this may come from having family and friends who went through much the same thing.) In these stories — for example, about the central European refugee colony in Lisbon in 1940, or about Dr Korn the music critic, arrived in New York with his 400 dollars and his offprint on Schubert from the *Zeitschrift für Musikwissenschaft* — Grab abandons the introspective exquisiteness for an almost documentary sobriety that is actually more affecting for being detached.

I do wonder whether Grab may not have been the sort of person who has too many different talents to be able to do true justice to any one of them. Not exactly a tragic fate, perhaps: but fate was unquestionably cruel in allowing him to record much less of the world than he surely had it in him to do. □

Temporal pain and paradoxes

Jenny Diski

Ghosts
EVA FIGES *Hamish Hamilton* £10.95

GOD KNOWS how many words and acres of empty space have been expended in telling us what the novel is, or should be, or can't be any more, or must be from now on.

For me, the joy of the novel — alive, I'd say, and kicking — is that it can be anything at all, provided it works. It offers a space, surrounded by the most movable of boundary markers, that can encompass the most expansive or microscopic view, according to the needs and vision of anyone who cares to use it.

Having put myself firmly in the literary agnostic camp, I suppose I have no right to feel alarmed when the publisher's blurb describes a book as "Not so much a novel as a prose poem . . ." Still, I approached *Ghosts* with caution and unearthed some fundamental prejudices in myself. I do not like novels in which none of the characters has a name. I have an antipathy to fiction in which a thick wedge of white space is placed between each short paragraph throughout the text. I am inclined to find tiresome the repeated use of paradoxical sentences such as "Is, and is not." and "The same, but not the same."

The devices aren't arbitrary, of course. They derive from the fact that we are being presented with the internal monologue of a woman in her late middle-age, dealing with the present — and assessing the past. Thoughts are fragmented and contradictory. The devices attempt to relate the linearity of a text to the fluidity of the internal process of time and recollection. I suppose that the constant struggle of the novelist is to use the empty space to describe the innermost workings of the individual consciousness. I'm not knocking the attempt, but for me the structure of *Ghosts* doesn't work. It's overly self-conscious and, far from drawing one in, essentially alienating.

The narrative is full of the pain of family: children who have long since grown up and away; a lover (husband?) seen off at a station and never heard of again (by us at any rate); a dying mother who remains unreachable. But characters who aren't characters, just passing slivers of memory, are hard to care about. It is a very unparticular story. There is nothing wrong with the ordinary, but for it to work on us as readers, we must feel the extraordinariness of the individual's experience of it. The prose, poetic as it is, conveys a certain universality, but doesn't convey the shock of the

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The *Independent*, launched 18 months ago and presently flourishing (a colour mag soon to come), has become so much part of the nation's wallpaper that it's difficult to think of it now as a radical journalistic mould-breaker. Its design, neat as a blue-striped shirt and ever so slightly boring, seems such a good fit that it's hard to imagine that it might have looked very different. Much of the fascination of Michael Crozier's THE MAKING OF THE INDEPENDENT (Gordon Frazer, £8.95) lies then in seeing the might-have-beens. Stephen Hitchins produced the original dummies in January 1986, one of which uses Franklin Gothic type for the headings, producing a startling image of how a merged *Guardependent* might look. In June, Ray Hawkey and Tony Mullins tried a downmarket look, unpleasantly suggestive of a broadsheet size *Daily Mail*. After a penultimate attempt by Nicholas Thirkell (which we aren't shown and which ended distinctly tearfully), the definitive, so-assured look was created in-house: Crozier apparently stepping in to redesign the whole thing in three days, with changes in typography and masthead right up to the launch. For the would-be newspaper baron, Crozier also gives plenty of background on the financing, setting up and running of the paper. One suspects that there must be a little bowdlerisation here: could anything involving journalists and large sums of money be as gentlemanly as all this? Or were the birth pains as restrained as the end product? (Tony Garrett)

individual's brush with the eternal mundane truths of everyday life.

The other great anguish is the passing of time. In the context of a year's changing seasons, the narrator finds herself passing out of the mainstream of life: giving away the family heirlooms, tolerated by the adult children, but unreconciled internally to herself as an ageing woman. The changing environment has not included her in its movement. She finds herself a stranger in the city she has walked through since childhood. Age alienates the individual from a world that seems to have moved on, all the energy is with youth.

This aspect of the book is stronger, more direct and biting. Watching a young woman with her small child she meditates:

> She is far too young, I think, to know what she is doing. Smiling foolishingly at the child, the way the elderly do, I remember. She is too young, I think, to know anything, and if she ever does, she will be too old . . . How absurd it is, the time scale of things. To know nothing at the time of knowing. Turn around girl. I was once like you.

The novel ends at a performance of *The Tempest* with the narrator and Prospero at one in their weary response to Miranda's cry of childlike wonder. "O brave new world," she declares, while the narrator sees only the door marked EXIT.

Raw fish and horseradish

Marianne Wiggins

Scandal
SHUSAKU ENDO *trans.* VAN C. GESSEL *Peter Owen*
£11.95

ONE THIRD OF THE WAY through Shusaku Endo's new novel, the reader encounters its opening paragraph repeated exactly, except for four words. The paragraph describes the sounds that an old man hears immediately preceding his physician's current diagnosis of his failing health. "The old chair seemed to need oiling," the novel (and the paragraph) begin:

> . . . when the doctor finished examining the charts and swiveled toward his patient, it gave out a squeak. Suguro's ears had grown accustomed to that sound over the course of his visits to this hospital. After the chair shrilled, the doctor always began his pep talk in deliberated tones, and today was no exception.

Suguro, the patient of this scene and the central character of *Scandal*, has figured as patient-cum-central character in one of Endo's earliest short stories, "The Forty-Year Old Man", published in 1964. In the story, Suguro, a Catholic, has kept a dreadful secret from his wife and his confessor. This Suguro, Endo's first one, is middle-aged, undergoing a series of thoracic surgeries in the months before his fortieth birthday. In the story, written soon after Endo himself had undergone one of the several operations which led to the removal of a lung, this first Suguro confesses his dark secret to a mynah bird he keeps as company in a cage on the hospital verandah. The secret is: while Suguro's wife was pregnant with their son, he had an affair with her cousin. The cousin, too, became pregnant and Suguro (the first one) accompanied her to the surgery, where he had arranged for an abortion. Blood is shed, which he looks on as a symbol, if not of forgiveness, then of expiation of his sin.

In *Scandal* the reader finds at least one, possibly two, more Suguro(s), each 25 years older than "The Forty-Year Old Man", each with a distinguishing mark below his left shoulder-blade — the purple crescent of a scar where a lung has been removed.

The Suguro in *Scandal* is, like Endo, an eminent Catholic writer, who is considering writing his *chef-d'oeuvre*: "I will call it *SCANDAL*," he tells his editor. He also has a secret, another hidden life where he succumbs to sexual temptation, only this Suguro doesn't find his satisfaction with the younger cousin of his wife, this Suguro likes to slobber on the bellies and the breasts of girls ("His saliva gleamed like slug trails along her stomach and breasts . . .") and then he likes to strangle them.

> *Christian Writer Lures Middle School Girl to Hotel*. He could almost see the headline. What sort of expression could he expect to see on the faces of the P.E.N. directors if such a story appeared next week? Would they feign ignorance, or would they urge him to resign from the committee? ▷

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Endo has spent his writing career exploring the bounds of Christian evil, asking again and again in his stories and novels: How can it be that Man is both this-and-that, both good and evil, two things at once? "There could be no doubt that a darkness he had never depicted in his fiction was concealed inside his own heart," Endo writes about Suguro. And, "Suppressed passion never dissipates," he has a chat-show host tell our hero. (Endo himself is a chat-show host in Japan.) "In reality these emotions are stored up in our hearts, where they smoulder like embers in a hibachi."

"That seems a very Freudian view," replies Suguro.

"You could certainly regard it as Freudian," the chat-show host answers. "Those smouldering embers can unexpectedly burst into flame. They can catch fire."

The problem with the name is that *it* never does. One doesn't believe for a moment that Suguro or his *doppelgänger* ever experience sado-masochism as one might experience faith or religion or *sushi*. Sex and guilt are discussed and displayed like raw fish, while Freud, that old horseradish, is dished out like *wasabi*. "Masochism just might be a deformation of this urge to subsist within the uterine waters," we are told.

"Is that Freud's notion?" asks Suguro. "Then what about sadism?"

The conclusion "about" sadism that *Scandal* offers is that sin itself is a form of re-birth and that "the potential for salvation is contained within the sin". What baffles the reader passing through this construction of doubles is its clumsiness. Shusaku Endo has been, in the past, an elegant and electrifying moralist. It confounds one to find him writing about sin, about salvation, like this;

> The dream lingered vividly in his memory. The feelings of fear and floundering revived Within him, and he almost thought he could see the light shining through the cervical opening.

To read a novel like this one, from such a formidable writer as Endo, is an exercise in practising Forgiveness.

He who dines and runs away

Martin Chalmers

Cutting Timber
THOMAS BERNHARD trans. EWALD OSERS
Quartet £9.95

THE SETTINGS of Thomas Bernhard's recent novels are much more recognisably contemporary than those of earlier masterpieces like *Gargoyles* and *The Lime Works* (see *NS* 6 Feb. 1987). Instead of an archaic rural Austria, the milieu is modern, urban Vienna, and the material the novels draw on is more evidently autobiographical.

There are risks in this shift. The targets of Bernhard's outrageous invective and withering observation of human weakness have become more identifiable and less universal. His towering scorn and disgust are sometimes in danger of overbalancing, when its objects are the puny figures of Viennese arts and letters.

The narrator of *Cutting Timber* finds himself condemned to attending an "artistic dinner party". It takes place on the evening after a funeral. The dead woman, who committed suicide, had been a friend both of the narrator and the hosts. The novel consists of a single, obsessive, hyperbolic monologue reflecting on the course of the dinner party, the funeral and the relationship between the narrator himself, the dead woman, the hosts and some of the other guests.

He accuses himself of a failure of nerve in accepting an invitation to an occasion he was bound to hate. From the security of a wing chair, he castigates the avarice and vanity of everyone present. However, the reader is on shaky ground in believing anything the narrator says — so often does he reverse statements and turn them back on himself. Finally, he behaves just as hypocritically as every other guest.

It would be equally unwise to collapse into one the identities of narrator and author. Nevertheless, some artists, including friends of Bernhard, recognised themselves in certain of the descriptions, objected to the characterisations — and took him to court. Bernhard is obviously determined to go to some lengths to avoid being absorbed into the artistic establishment.

The attacks on the pretentions of an artistic life overshadowed by the giants of Viennese traditions (the drunken host, who takes to waving his lower denture about at one point, is a minor follower of Webern) and on the links between art and social climbing are not so central to this novel as might at first appear. More searching are the considerations of our inability to cope with death and the erosion of the rituals that used to accompany it. A large place, too, is taken by reflections on friendship: the suddenness with which ties of apparently lifetime importance can be broken and replaced by indifference; how regret can turn to hatred.

The narrator even displays a degree of tenderness in his regard for the dead woman, Joanna. Her life had fallen apart when the male artist, with whom she had lived and who she "scared out of mediocrity", had left her. More unexpectedly, perhaps, the novel itself also concludes on a note of tenderness, even optimism.

The activities of walking and running have always been important within Bernhard's writing. A quality of his prose is a constant, almost physical attempt to outrun the constraints of words and the constraint of bodily frailty. This aspect assumes an almost celebratory charge at the end of *Cutting Timber*. Having been the last to leave the party (perhaps to be a more convincing liar in expressing his thanks to the hostess) the narrator begins to run towards the city centre: "... and I ran and ran and ran, as if now in the eighties I were once more escaping from the fifties and into the eighties, into these dangerous and helpless and brainless eighties . . . and I reflected while running now through the inner city that this city was nevertheless my city and always would be my city and that these people were my people and always would be my people and I ran and ran..."

As they mean to go on

Roz Kaveney

IN FIRST NOVELS, writers have to make the most dramatic decisions about voice; what they decide will determine how people categorise them thereafter.

It would be nice to believe that no one writes a novel thinking of it as a Fitzgeraldian celebration of doomed youthful pleasure, or a terse examination of women's oppression, or a piece of pawky Southern realism, but this is not that sort of world. It is almost impossible to write without knowing at some point how what you are writing will be described when it gets out into the wide and wicked world, and self-consciousness is, if not a fault, then at least a fact in the books reviewed here. Even when a novelist is not working in a defined commercial genre, a sense of category, no matter how loose, makes it impossible to be innocent.

The Mysteries of Pittsburgh (Hodder/Sceptre, £10.95 & £3.50) is shameless about the whole thing: Michael Chabon has decided to be the Golden Boy, and pretty much gets away with it. The Bildungsroman is always a novel about writing a novel; the choices which young Art Bechstein makes are not only between lovers and companions but also between the sort of novel he is going to inhabit, between a sort of non-aristocratic *Brideshead*, a combination of Kerouac and George V. Higgins, and some kind of "Have them meet cute" Hollywoodish romance. Like most novels about bisexuality, this has an implied copy-book heading about not having your cake and eating it, but crass moralising is not what Chabon's about.

It is probably not the case that the respectable echelons of the Mafia, or the staff of down-market bookstores, look or act like this, but Chabon has the capacity to convince us that they do and to make the very fact magical, an opening of doors onto rich variety of which we had not dreamed. His underlining of the realities which, through Art Bechstein's infatuated perception, he romanticises — the biker rebel Cleveland is developing a beergut; the elegantly camp Arthur housesits the sort of house his mother cleans — can get crudish,

Blinded

Elizabeth Dix

They told you to see a doctor
about your weird daughter.
You sat in the right chair,
shaking, growing bolder.

You smiled at the shrink,
holding out a snapshot.
"I brought this along
so that you could see what she is like."

The shrink stared back
as if to say,
"Can't you see?"
When you noticed the guide-dog on a lead.

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but at least there is a sense of the need to control lushness. Chabon knows how to get from A to B in his scarlet convolvulus of a plot; he can drop the level of pose in his style to describe a burglary or a beating, and elevate it to the point of rhetoric for his knowing elegiac coda.

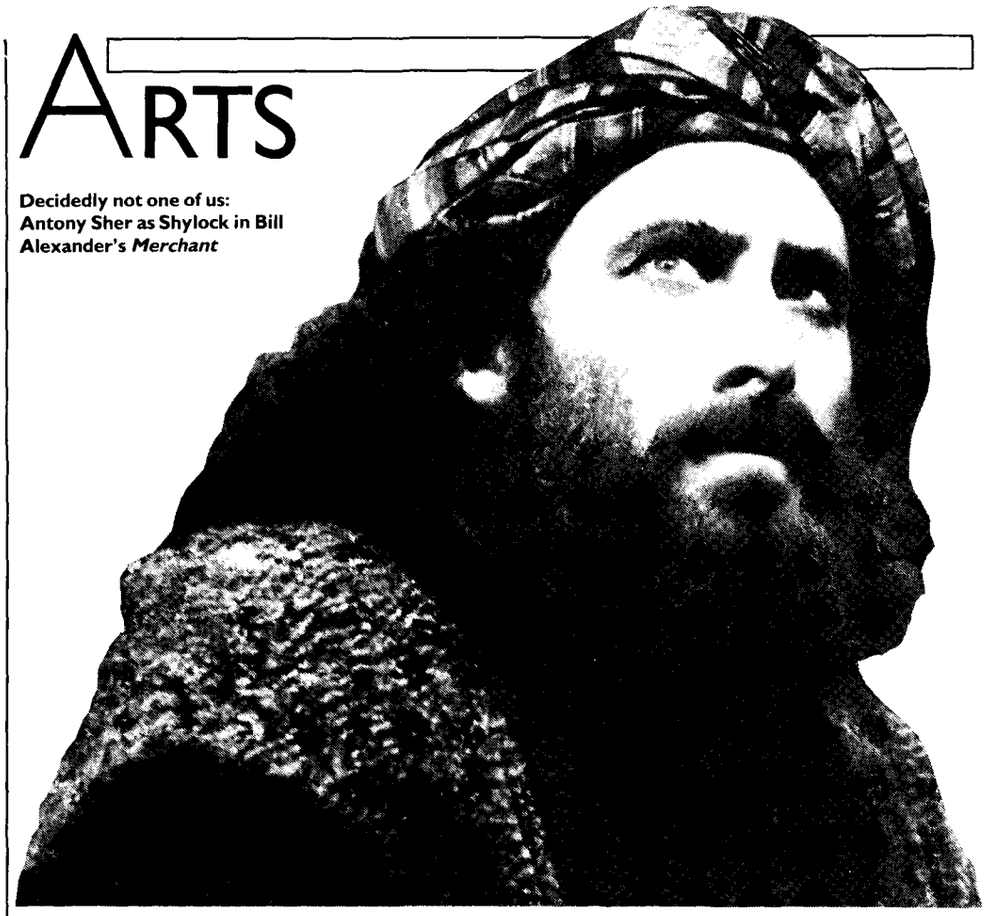
There is something shaming in the comparison of a gaudy flake like Chabon with the solid, clipped worthiness of Marion Quedneau. The shame comes not from the fact that they are both good, but from the fact that reading Chabon is a lot more fun. **The Butterfly Chair** (Virago, £10.95) starts with an account of real and credible violence quite unlike the theatrical menace which lowers round the corners of Chabon: the heroine's intelligent, gifted architect father has been prevented from continuing to beat up her mother, and so kills her and himself, quietly and as neatly as is possible, with a gun. This section is an epitome of a thousand case histories and is terrifying in its hyperrealistic inconsequence. The later sections of the book deal with Else's attempts to cope with this past and to build a present of autonomy and love on its ruins; some sections are less good than others, but one is too shellshocked from the opening especially to care.

That is one way to deal with marital violence, by giving our faces a brisk rub-down with gravel; another is to set the teeth so far on edge with cuteness that one longs to be back with grit. **Ellen Foster** (Cape, £9.95), eponymous child heroine of Kaye Gibbon's first novel, is one of those precocious *fausse naive* eleven-year-olds who may only exist in fiction but are an honourable enough literary convention by now for it not to matter. The tone of voice is a fake, but it is a fake which does an efficient job of telling us about sharecropping, unforgiving Southern matriarchs, suicide. Ellen is all the more a dreadful child for being a sensible and perceptive one; she is a limited, rather than an unreliable, narrator and her eventual realisation of her racist patronage of her friend Scarletta is a telling, if highly artificial, rebuke to adults even more limited, even less reliable.

Ellen Foster deals with class in passing and in melodramatic terms of disowned children; Glenn Savan's **White Palace** (Bantam, £4.95) is that rare thing, an American novel which deals with class solidly and realistically. Its handling of the obsessional affair between a young widower executive and a lush untidy waitress a decade and a half his senior touches, a lot of the time, on raw nerves. The book is exuberantly and at times embarrassingly graphic in its portrayal of sex and of that slight scumminess of the collar and the cuffs which comes from not getting home to your own bed. Savan is good on the office life Max is trying to keep on an even keel, and on his yuppy Jewish friends who dislike Nora when he allows her to meet them almost as much as she dislikes them.

Our sense of her life as existing when he is not around is not quite as strong — is carried less by continuous effort than the vigour of her speech and a couple of set pieces. But Savan manages to make her demands for respect and occasional attempts at self-improvement real in ways that are not patronising. The grubby realism — or should that be Grubby Realism? — of Savan's story combines respect for his characters with scarifyingly precise social observation. This is a book written knowing there was little of it that the author would have to live down.

ARTS



Decidedly not one of us: Antony Sher as Shylock in Bill Alexander's *Merchant*

Two views of the ghetto

Jews don't emerge as heroes from either of two current plays about them — but at least in one, says **VICTORIA RADIN**, *the historical context has been understood*

ANTONY SHER's Shylock in the Royal Shakespeare Company's compelling production of **The Merchant of Venice**, now transferred to the Barbican from Stratford, is hardly a noble figure. From the first moment we're apprised of an overwhelming and rather unappetising foreignness. Crinkly dark pubic-seeming hair crowns him and flows in a long beard; his small black eyes dart and his laugh is manic. His speech is heavily and unpleasantly accented, for he is a Turkish Jew who wears slippers on his feet and a striped kaftan over voluminous trousers. Lolling back be-turbaned on the sofa where he receives Antonio and Bassanio, he looks like a Beardsley caricature for *The Arabian Nights*.

The triumph of Bill Alexander's production is that no one indulges in any special pleading to make this Shylock palatable. Rather, they situate him firmly in a particular society and ask us what we make of the conjunction. When Hazlitt saw Edmund Kean's performance in 1814 he said of Shylock: "Certainly our sympathies are much oftener with him than with his enemies. He is honest in his vices; they are hypocrites in their virtues." This is very much the premise of this production.

Shylock's remark that Antonio and his gang of young bloods "void your rheum upon my beard and foot me" is borne out by an Antonio who does indeed spit and kick. In their first scene together he wields his long cane over Shylock's head and tears the abacus out of his hands. A long silence from Shylock follows, after which he asks, "Hath a dog money?" We see a very angry outsider struggling to keep his dignity. When he takes the cane out of Antonio's hands, the Christian group cowers, for they are bullies.

A yellow Star of David is daubed on the back wall of Kit Surrey's intentionally depressing brown set; and when Shylock appears for the courtroom scene he wears the star sewn on his back. This is less a reminder of our post-Holocaust consciousness than an accurate suggestion of the Venice of the period, when Jews were indeed forced to wear the insignia and to live a circumscribed life in the original ghetto. Jessica's theft of her father's wealth and flight with Lorenzo therefore becomes understandable: she has had enough of being Jewish in this society and is escaping by buying her way into the fashionable crowd. She kneels before Portia as before a queen, naively eager for a crumb of attention in Belmont, where Lorenzo and his mates leave her a lonely figure standing always outside the crowd.

The play emerges as less specifically about Jews — after all, the black Prince of Morocco is mocked out of Belmont (and Deborah Findlay's supercilious Portia nearly faints with disgust when he kisses her hand) — and much more generally about the condition of being different and alien in a recognisable world of bullying, baiting and underdogs. Its moral ugliness, and the dialectic constructed by this unappealing Shylock, reverberate in the mind long afterwards. ▷

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The spurious importance given to Jim Allen's **Perdition** by the Royal Court's last-minute cancellation of the play some 18 months ago crumbles even further with its staging for six nights (to 13 May) at Conway Hall by Pam Brighton, a former theatre director turned barrister. This is not the play of the production script, nor of the amended last-minute performance version, nor even of the still further amended published work. Gone is the modicum of human interest which suggested that what one was seeing was a work of fiction and not an historical record.

The opening words of the anti-Zionist counsel, Scott, on "the mob outside" and a joke about selling tickets — a reference to the demonstration Allen had said he hoped to provoke by the play — have vanished. So, too, have his Zionist protagonist's curious closing revelations that he has set up the trial in order to expose himself, that he likes Scott for punishing him, that he feels "words hard as nails" and that he sees a "tall black Crucifix of a woman".

Gone too is the knife and cutting imagery reminiscent of *The Merchant*, such as "the Zionist knife in the Nazi fist". Among other deletions are: "the road to Golgotha runs along Park Avenue, where rich American Jews hurl tax-deductible donations [to Israel] from their fur-lined dugouts", and my particular favourite: "Are you saying the Jews are cowards in an emergency [i.e. the Holocaust]?"; "That's for the jury to decide." (And can the audience, who are the jury, decide next time whether blacks have rhythm — or whether there really *was* a slave trade?)

Some of the fancy has gone; and some new facts have been added. What a slippery thing is Allen's hold on history, even on his own play. But is it a play at all? Spectators at Conway Hall could be forgiven for assuming that what appeared on the stage, with all its seemingly authoritative apparatus of a courtroom, was the record of a real trial.

They would be wrong. Dr Yaron, who is suing Ruth Kaplan, his former assistant, for libel about his activities in Hungary in 1944, is only very loosely based on Rudolf Kastner, a Hungarian Zionist who was head of Budapest's Jewish rescue committee.

In fact, Kastner's real trial occurred in Israel in the mid 1950s and what may have been weak and selfish (but not conspiratorially Zionist) behaviour has been the subject of at least one Israeli play and novel. Allen's dramadoc takes the trial to England in 1967 in the aftermath of the Six-Day-War: one feels as if one is privy to secrets hidden from Israel. What is more dishonest is Allen's reliance, even in this new version, on the real trial as evidence against his fictitious protagonists. "Kastner and I..." claims Yaron: two colluding villians for the price of one.

Yaron is made to be a gynaecologist, a strange choice of profession until one of the witnesses against him goes into detail about her Nazi-irradiated ovaries. Allen may have now removed most of his bald statements on the congruence of Judaisim and Nazism; he can continue it by innuendo.

The baffling lack of debate in the performed play betrays a relentlessness which leaps the bounds of the form Allen has set himself. Yaron is acted by Alan Surtees as a cold, contemptuous, cynical figure who answers accusations either by a mumbled plea of helplessness or by silence. His counsel also proves strangely inadequate: instead of eliciting counter-arguments his questions feed yet more accusations. His sole witness is a suave ex-Labour MP wearing a matching polka dot bow-tie and breast handkerchief who speaks in a fluting voice. On the other hand, both Ruth Kaplan (female unlike the real Kastner's accuser) and her (female) witness are permitted emotion, even tears.

Allen provides her with yet another witness: "an [invented] historian."

Unbalanced by unanswered assertions, the play appears a piece of agitprop, hectoring and sensationalising. Scott, Ms Kaplan's counsel, constantly turns to the audience, bats his eyelids and pauses portentously over catalogues of horror; Allen has Yaron "sending [the Jews] to the gas chambers". In our age of hysterical search for certainties and our eternal desire, like Shakespeare's Christians, to blame the victims, perhaps some people will believe it.

In the meantime, the real and pressing problem of what the Israeli government is doing now goes sadly unexplored. □

ART

Clumsy, rough-cast "Pastoral" (c.1870) by the unknown Cézanne

Hated imaginings

John Spurling

Cézanne: The Early Years 1859-72
RA, until 21 August, then Paris and Washington
Edward Middleditch
Serpentine, until 15 May

THE CÉZANNE EXHIBITION begins with four tall canvases in glowing colours depicting female personifications of the Seasons and signed "INGRES". They don't suggest Ingres for a moment, but rather some barely competent academic imitator from the provinces. They hung originally at one end of the *grand salon* of Cézanne's father's new country mansion near Aix-en-Provence and were arranged, as now at the RA, around a full-length profile portrait in a completely different, rugged style, of the father himself. Louis-Auguste Cézanne — in heavy, dark clothes, helmet-like cap and big boots, sitting cross-legged and reading a newspaper on an upright chair against a red-tiled floor and a black wall — looks more like a miner than a successful banker.

The discordance of the ensemble and the sense of a complex web of protest and dependence — Cézanne disliked Ingres as well as banking, but required his father, who perhaps admired Ingres, to support him in his ambition to become a great painter in the anti-Ingres tradition of Delacroix and Courbet — prepare one in some measure for the remarkable display ahead. Even so, the first encounter with the 22-year-old painter himself, in a self-portrait based on a photograph, is a shock. If this person with his yellowish complexion, rectangular forehead under close-clipped, squared-off hair, his eyes rolling upwards, his blood-red lips and eye-corners, his bandit-moustache and angry mouth is not actually mad, he is extremely disturbed. He might be a murderer or he might be Edvard Munch, two years before Munch was born and a quarter of a century before he began to paint his *fin-de-siècle* screams of emotional disturbance.

At the end of the exhibition there's another self-portrait, painted some ten years later. All traces of the violent young would-be murderer have disappeared. This heavy, barbarously-bearded, balding man, with unkempt long hair curling up at the sides and pointed satyr's eyebrows below a domed forehead, looks like a Russian exile — eccentric, suspicious, not very friendly, but not actively dangerous. The 70-odd paintings and drawings assembled between the two portraits tell the story — with the help of a first-rate catalogue (RA/Weidenfeld, £10.95) containing indispensable essays by Sir Lawrence Gowing and others —

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of how the one turned into the other.

The show contains several landscapes and still-lifes, chunky, heavily-painted, their components locked together as if they were sculptures, their subject-matter uncompromisingly commonplace, unglamorous. This is Courbet's peasant-eye view of nature with the emphasis on its earthward pull rather than, say, Corot's more gentlemanly appreciation of atmosphere and refreshment.

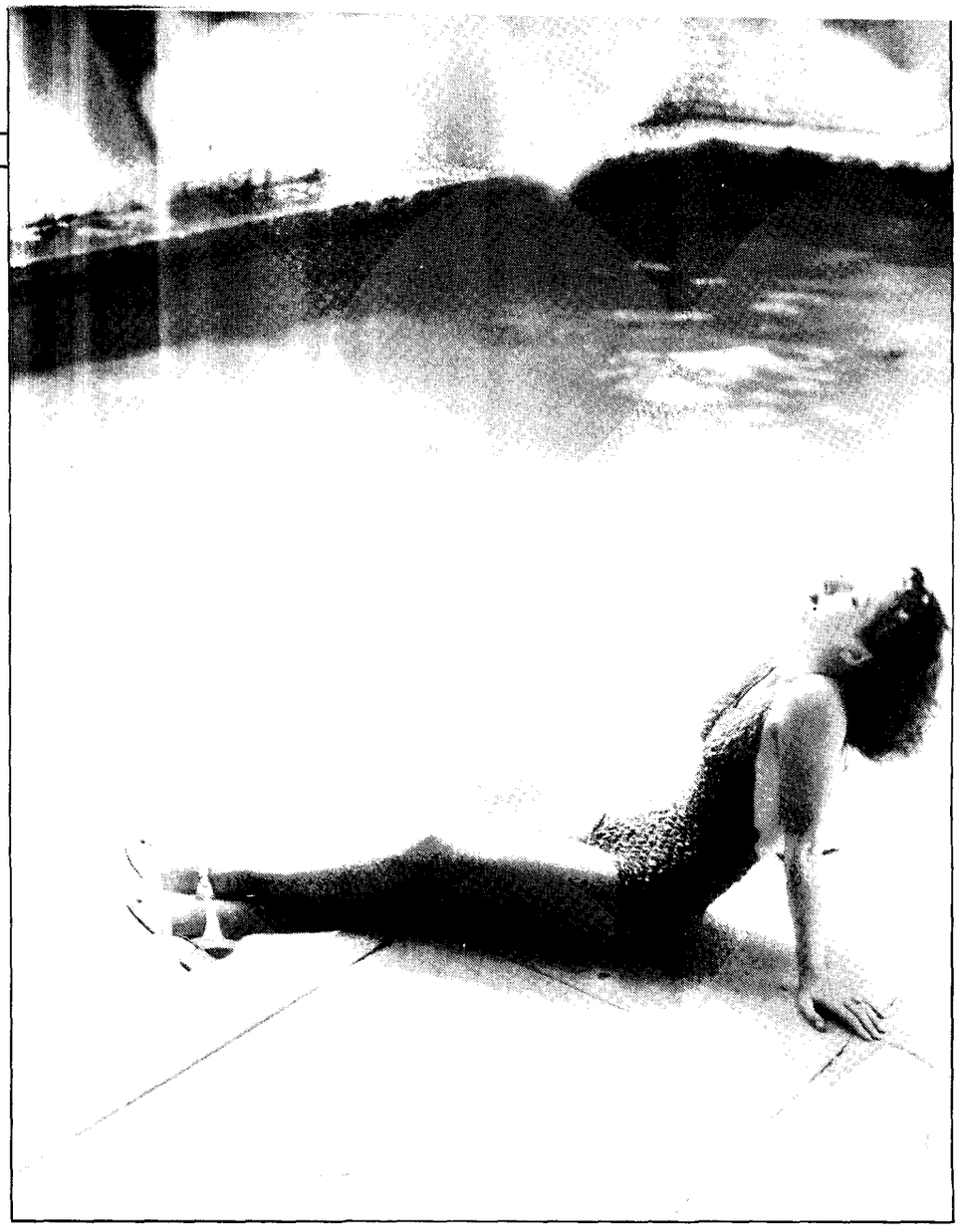
But although with hindsight we know that these motifs were the "true" ones, that the bald 32-year-old bear at the end of the show was already beginning to understand how to channel most of his unruly emotions through them, in this context they seem relatively minor experiments. The noticeable things are the ostentatiously rough-cast, palette-knife portraits of friends and relations and the allegorical or mythological figure-paintings.

"In old age," Lawrence Gowing writes, "Cézanne is said to have told Joachim Gasquet: 'My method if I have one is based on hatred of the imaginative.' Many of the imaginings of the later 1860s might have incurred such a hatred." Here indeed, in violently stagey scenes of temptation, orgy, rape and murder, is the world imagined by the self-portrayed criminal-type who hung crude spoofs of Ingres in his father's drawing-room and whose bosom schoolboy friend, Émile Zola (at least one of the catalogue essays suggests that their friendship was actively homosexual), went on to write his own maturer and more realistic versions of such imaginings in *Thérèse Raquin* and *Nana*.

It seems incredible that this exhibition has not been mounted before. It amounts almost to the revelation of a new artist, an unknown and very uncertain Romantic/Expressionist half-way between Delacroix and the Fauves, whose one-man movement might be christened Repressionism. Of course it's only in our time that this sort of personal mythologising and inchoate violence, combined with technical ineptitude, has been turned into a fashionable international style, but the other, classical Cézanne, redeemed from his Repressionist struggles, who confronts us as we leave the exhibition, would surely be as contemptuous of the facile violence and deliberate clumsiness of 1980s' "bad painting" as of the belated *Ingristes* of the 1860s.

Edward Middleditch died last summer at the age of 64, just as this touring retrospective opened at Norwich, where he had taught at the School of Art for 20 years. He was docketed in the '50s as one of the "Kitchen Sink" painters and, with Bratby, Greaves and Jack Smith, represented Britain in the 1956 Venice Biennale, but much of his later energy went into teaching and three-quarters of the work in this exhibition dates from before 1963. Helen Lessore, who showed his work for several years in her Beaux Arts Gallery, once called it "gentle and lyrical", but at its best it seems to me the reverse: forceful, monumental and essentially gloomy.

Middleditch seldom looks at the grand effects of nature, except in a series of Bombergian landscapes done in Spain, but finds a strange frozen equilibrium between movement or growth and stasis or dissolution in the flow of water over a weir, the clawing branches of a fig-tree or a few dry stalks of grass or cow-parsley. His finest works are the last: drawings of a cornfield, of cut corn, of a field of oats dashed by a storm and of burning stubble. All have a strong sense of death, but also of continuance, repetition, endlessness. □



Not naughty but nice: Danielle Darrieux relaxes wholesomely in *Club de Femmes*

CINEMA

The scissor-men

Judith Williamson

The return to the circuits of Jacques Deval's 1936 "Club de Femmes", uncut, exposes the censors for the dangerous idiots they were

IF THIS column didn't seem to make a lot of sense last week, that's because (for a variety of production reasons) it was cut. Between writing and printing it lost not only sentences and paragraphs, but parts of sentences — leaving strange elisions, non sequiturs and abrupt turns.

Questions of cutting have been on my mind this week for a variety of reasons. The British Film Institute has just re-released a new, uncut print of Jacques Deval's 1936 French farce *Club de Femmes*: a jolly, feminist-humanist comedy about a girls' boarding house which, because it featured a lesbian character and an extra-marital pregnancy, was heavily censored for its brief run in New York in 1937.

Whole scenes and chunks of the plot were removed; nudity (not that there *is* any of the full-frontal sort) was suppressed entirely and the subtitles were carefully manipulated to alter the implied nature of the central relationships. But what is interesting about the complete version of the film is that its strongest quality isn't naughtiness but *robustness* — which is, in an important sense, exactly the opposite.

Thus an account of the film's key events — a young dancer smuggles her boyfriend into the house and becomes pregnant, a foreign student gets pulled into a prostitution ring organised by the switchboard operator and a beautiful young lesbian, whose beloved friend is raped by one of the ring's "clients", commits murder — gives absolutely no sense of the film's tone, precisely because we are accustomed to thinking of these as risqué or seamy subjects. The tone of *Club de Femmes* is consistently *wholesome*: in this its philosophy is in line with that of the eponymous establishment.

For the Club de Femmes is a sort of hotel started by the well-meaning Mme Fargeton (Eve Francis) in order to protect young single women in Paris: it aims to provide "modest material comforts and moral security". The events of the film show that Mme Fargeton's ideals are less easily realised than she thought; yet they are, in the end, re-validated rather than undermined by the incorporation of

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British Gas

the less-than-ideal occurences.

I have suggested before that liberalism must be constantly stumbling on its own boundaries if it is to continue seeming liberal; the warm-hearted humanism of *Club de Femmes* is revitalised in a structurally similar way. Its component qualities of kindly innocence and worldly experience are divided between Mme Fargeton and her friend Dr Aubrey (Valentine Tessler) whose medical knowledge and professional ethics result in her knowing a great deal more about the girls' real lives than the *directrice*. Yet at the end of the film the two outlooks dovetail again when Danielle Darrieux's illegitimate baby is born at the club: "Everything's in order — it's a girl," says the doctor — and even Mme Fargeton cannot disapprove. We are returned to a more complete (feminist!) humanity that transcends strict social codes.

But this is not to say it is *im*moral — far from it: the whole point about humanist morality is that it has to set itself up as *more* moral than the narrow and often cruel conventions of its time. There is a long tradition of this kind of humanism in cinema — think of Griffith's *Way Down East*, for example, where Lillian Gish is punished by small town moralists for her pregnancy — and this is, in a way, linked with the film's capacity for realism, the sense of showing things "as they really are". *Club de Femmes* seems to say: "Girls will be girls; this is how life *is*; incorporate it into your morality or that morality will be worthless." And this message (hardly revolutionary in itself) is linked with the physically robust quality which makes the film such fun.

Girls in shorts leap around the gym; girls in their lingerie giggle in their bedrooms; girls are allowed to look at one another, touch one another, not because this is a "lesbian film" (though the one lesbian character is portrayed sympathetically) but because it is, in every sense, a "full-bodied" film. Its physicality is not voyeuristic but energetic, not seamy but positively bounding (in that peculiarly '30s way) with health. It is only from the censor's viewpoint that everything suddenly becomes sordid. The only real nakedness in *Club de Femmes* is when the raped girl, returning to her room desperate and tearful, is shown tearing off her clothes and frantically showering, precisely to get rid of that sordidness from the (entirely off-screen) rape. This scene was, of course, cut: thus does censorship turn values entirely in reverse.

After its brief run, this film never took off in the America of the Hayes code. Recently, however, a New York cinema ran a "Hollywood before the code" season which, like the uncut *Club de Femmes*, gave a fascinating opportunity to consider what the code changed. I went to see Barbara Stanwyck in William Wellman's *Night Nurse* (1931); such is our *"Danish Dentist"* film culture that I had imagined it would be about a brothel. Instead, it is a highly moral tale in which Stanwyck saves two sick children who are being poisoned by their mother's drug-pushing lover. There is no "sex" in the film at all. But there *is* sensuality, physicality, people dressing, undressing — and, when a medical student puts a skeleton in Barbara Stanwyck's bed for a prank, she hops into the next one with her friend and snuggles up for the night.

The Hayes code didn't even allow married couples in the same bed, let alone two women. But seeing pre-code films *en masse* leaves one most

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strongly with the sense, not of risqué subjects or underwear scenes, but of general exuberance, physical freedom, a kind of toughness. Films of the code era look stilted by comparison and, more to the point, they become insinuating and coy. (They also become more heavily symbolic, so that sex becomes lighting someone's cigarette.)

Though I started with a personal complaint, I'll finish with the real reason for thinking about cutting and codes: Section 28. The point about the Hayes code was not that it tried to "clean up" everything, but that it made everything seem dirty. It appears that we are entering another era of disgust; the time to fight that emotion is now.

TELEVISION

Talking revolution

W. Stephen Gilbert

1968 WAS FULL of talk; 1988 is full of talk about 1968. At any rate, Channel 4's decision to run a number of programmes hindsighting and quite likely mythologising that "turbulent year" (Dr DeLores Tucker, *After Dark*) found a ready response and a vast stage army of veterans only too eager to brandish their scar tissue.

I'd better briefly get out my own nicks and crannies. As a University College London student at the time, I shouted "we are all foreign scum" and rolled marbles under the hooves of the mounted police with the best of them. Some show of commitment, even if it was rather more often to good grass, loud rock and sexual adventurism than to class analysis, civil disobedience and sexual politics, was *de rigueur*. But when our gang finally arrived in Paris in 1970 (we *abom*inated fashion) and put it about our recently sat-in corridor at the Cité Universitaire that our basic politics was *apathiquism*, somebody nailed the bitten-off head of a pigeon to our door. *Ah, Albion perfide*!

Its internationalism was perhaps the element most contributing to the sense that May 1968 was the apogee of an era now entirely gone. Next after that was its innocence of its own sexism. I suppose it is only consistent that whereas London then played so peripheral a role, England is now the home of the politics of greed and Thatcherism the name of that politics familiar across the planet. How strange that its begetter should be a woman.

C4's agenda was initially laid out in a magnificent pull-together of archive footage (and *only* archive footage) in **1968 — Power to the Imagination: Europe's Revolutionary Spring**. Though Vietnam, Czechoslovakia and Britain featured in passing, the two centres of real ferment were correctly identified as Berlin and Paris. In particular, the account of everything that took place on the Parisian streets will surely be taken as definitive from now on. Mark Anderson and Orly Bat Carmel made this for Brook Productions.

The same producer/directors brought together the survivors for **Power to the Imagination: Hindsight**. In the spectrum of discussion from utterly mediated to spontaneously live, this had by a mile the most extensive post-production work invested in it. Not only was the central round-table discussion highly edited, its deliberations were also intercut with individual ruminations (i.e. not in conversation) from other more detached observers. These speakers, it seemed, were all academics who had not been demonstrators in 1968 because they were either too old (E.P. Thompson, Alain Touraine) or too fogeyish (Roger Scruton).

By the weight and drive of his contribution, Stuart Hall furnished a motor for the whole debate. He spoke of a "rising class" putting forward a body of ideas, including the notion of "a revolution against the political agenda". And, whether or not he had seen the accompanying compilation, he isolated the two central points arising from the programme: "the media hold an enormous responsibility in constructing '68 as a moment of violence . . . ever since then, people in politics are aware of the central role that the media have in defining the political agenda" and there was "what I call the revolution inside the revolution . . . those women who were invited to liberate the rest of the world but not themselves . . . they realised the revolution has to begin at home . . . [this] transformed the political agenda for ever".

Stokely Carmichael's notorious retort when asked what position women should take in the revolution — "prone" — was bound to be called upon as evidence of the spectacular sexism of the time. Male chauvinism entirely unreconstructed was not, however, a prerequisite for your heart sinking at the song launching the all-women discussion programme **The Time of Her Life:** "She's a woman of the Aquarian Age/Surely something's got to change". After that, a deal of recovery was necessary but a well-chosen group covered some quite useful ground which informed me and maybe also reinforced some women viewers. Consensus against Thatcher — "she's a woman, she's not a sister", Patricia Hollis noted irrefutably — was denied by Jane Reed, the managing editor of the Murdoch paper *Today*, who was duly barracked for claiming that "she wasn't a woman, she was Prime Minister; and she had bigger things to worry about". Until the excellent Sheila McKecknie reminded them that the assault on the welfare state hits women harder and faster than it does men, they were for a moment poised to acknowledge that class is really a bigger and more painful nettle than gender.

Felix Dennis, one of the three tried over the celebrated School Kids' edition of *the* '60s underground mag *Oz* is now a wealthy entrepreneur with yellow-tinted specs to whom class politics surely must be incomprehensible. On **The Media Show**'s debate, he cried (justly) that *Oz* was terribly sexist, but this was in a prepared defence of the pouting-model cover of a computer mag he publishes. His idea of a *coup de grace* was to reveal with a school-kid's flourish that the editor of the offending mag was a woman. *Proving*, Felix? Richard Neville hung his head that he had ever been associated with such a loud-mouthed jerk.

The discussion was less than a meeting of minds, though Anna Coote and Ken Loach both made sharp comments ("The experience of the global village," said Loach, " for most people is watching American soaps") and John Peel was enjoyably waspish. I couldn't tell if they all listened to Dusan Makavejev in such respectful silence because he's such a revered director (is he)? or because he's a foreigner.

The *After Dark* discussion, **Derry 68: Look Back in Anger**?, was simply the most enlightening programme on Northern Ireland I have ever seen.

PLANNING

As flies to wanton boys

Jules Lubbock

Has conservation "gone too far"? Would our towns and cities be more beautiful if, unhampered by planning controls, architects and developers were simply left to get on with it?

THOSE ARE THE REAL issues — issues of the greatest importance — that will be in the dock at the public inquiry, on Tuesday 17 May, into Mr Palumbo's latest proposals for redeveloping the high-Victorian offices opposite the Mansion House.

The obvious trial will be of architect James Stirling's scheme. Proposing to demolish all existing buildings on the Mansion House site, eight of which are Grade 2, including the wonderful Mappin & Webb corner, it is bound to be the subject of fierce debate — specifically about whether it can be called an "acceptable proposal" within the terms of the Secretary of State's decision letter of 1985 rejecting the Mies van der Rohe tower. Since it "dominates . . . neighbouring buildings", including the Mansion House, "fundamentally alters the character" of the area, is not "in harmony" but in "stark conflict" with those surroundings that are not bulldozed aside, it seems in clear-cut breach of paragraph 14. But the wider political issue, which will probably determine the narrower one of whether these buildings should be preserved, cannot be aired at the inquiry. So I shall devote my column to that.

The government is in two minds. On the one hand its political bedrock in "deep England", to use Patrick Wright's memorable phrase, strongly supports statutory conservation and planning control. I don't suppose the Secretary of State himself would altogether welcome a multi-storey car-park next to his beautiful home near Tewkesbury. Moreover, Circular 8/87, issued as recently as March 1987, unequivocally re-affirms the government's "resolve to preserve the architectural heritage" through "listed buildings and conservation areas" — a policy unaltered since the bipartisan *Civic Amenities Act* of 1967.

On the other hand the 20th Earl of Caithness, reflecting Mr Ridley's innermost thoughts in the House of Lords Debate on British Architecture of 30 March, believes that the individual's freedom to do as he likes with his own property should be paramount and that a bare minimum of regulation will result in a lively variety of styles to reflect business's new-found confidence. The Prime Minister herself rightly admires Victorian commercial architecture, which she believes to have been the product of unrestricted market forces — and evidence of those forces' superiority to the bureaucratic aesthetic controls of the planning system, responsible in the government's opinion for the grey ascetic style of the offices of the 1960s. A departmental working party is revising the 1971 Planning Act accordingly. At stake is the fundamental principle of the law of planning: that

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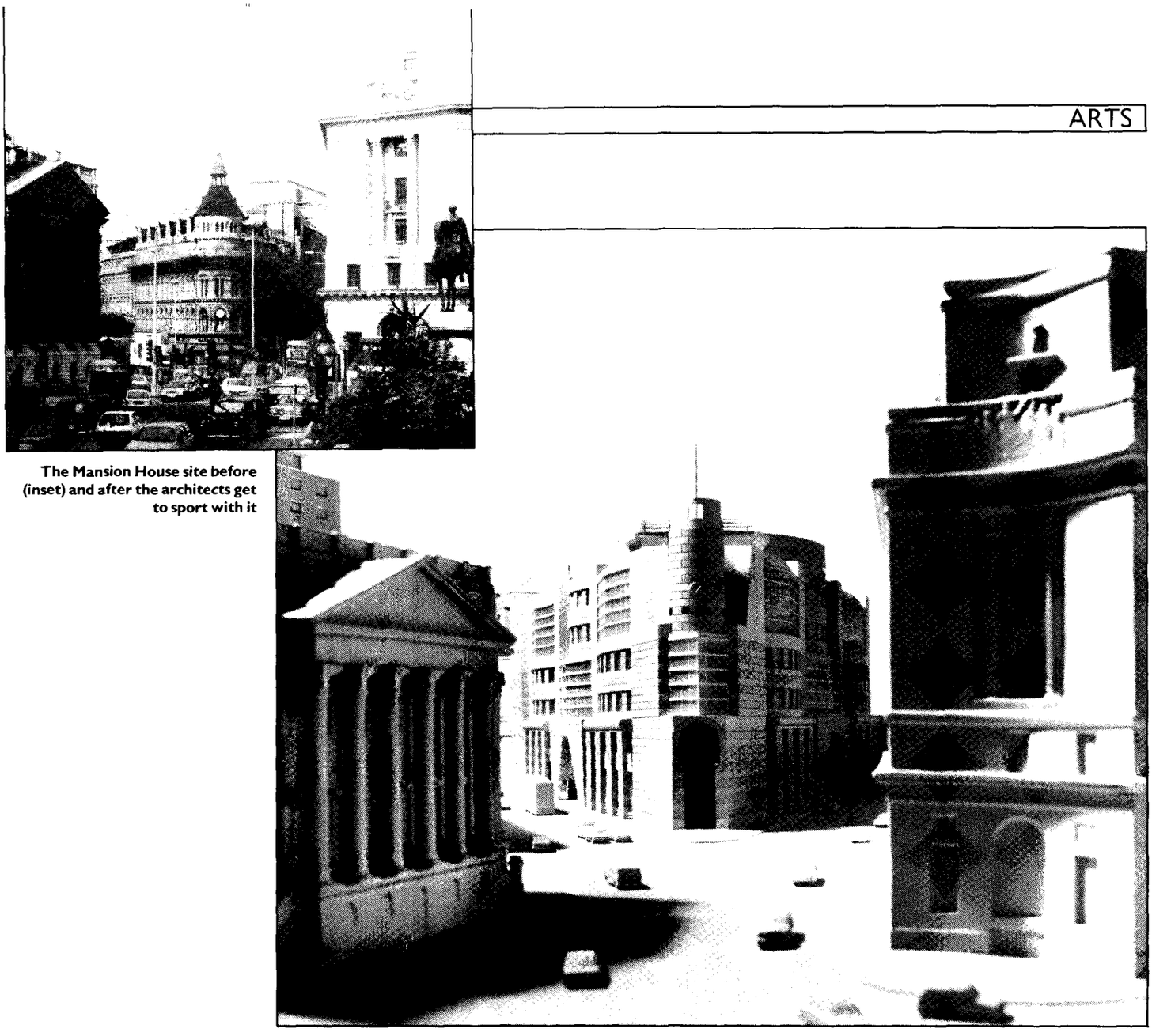

The Mansion House site before (inset) and after the architects get to sport with it

individuals do *not* have an unassailable right to do as they please with their own property. Can statutory conservation — on the basis of this government's principles — be justified?

We are concerned here with facades, not with what occurs inside a building. Facades mark the frontier between the private space within and the public street. They may be mean or they may be richly and generously adorned — but in England, historically, there has been little in the way of legal compulsion upon property owners to make their facades beautiful, unlike in France.

Where private property has chosen to spend money upon the adornment of a facade it has done so freely, in the spirit of good citizenship, as a gift to the city.

There has certainly been a long tradition of *negative* legislation — of bye-laws defining height limits and street alignments — but Mrs Thatcher and Mr Ridley are not so far wrong: within the shape so defined, high-Victorian commercial architecture was "less stately but more various" than that of the Haussmann Boulevards, reflecting free-market principles rather than the absolutism of the Third Empire.

This is all the more reason why such facades should now be preserved. They are an extraordinary public benefaction, so generous in their ornament and gratefully cherished by generations of city workers and visitors as a much-loved part of the familiar scene. As the current owner of some of them, Mr Palumbo should not need to be coerced into his stewardship of the "public" property he has acquired as part and parcel of his undeniable right to profit from his property. It would be much better, as Mr Ridley is so fond of saying, if people did the right thing of their own volition. But let us not forget that the intrusion of law in 1967 was justified by a universal outcry against the imminent destruction of our cities unleashed after a mere decade of comprehensive redevelopment by the 1947 Planning Act.

The 1947 Act was a disaster for good architecture. There the government's instincts are right. But their reasons are totally wrong — and their attempts at deregulation are actually making matters worse. With architecture, as distinct from land use, the Act, far from increasing aesthetic controls, actually removed the minimal bye-laws and replaced them by interminable negotiations, just as it replaced the civil engineers who had expeditiously administered those bye-laws with architect-trained planners negotiating with other architects and their developer-clients. It was the removal of clear-cut rules that caused the delays, and only their re-introduction will "simplify the planning system"; further deregulation will exacerbate the problem.

The regime of the 1947 Act was, in short, designed by architects for architects as an "architects' charter". Those smoke-filled planning negotiations, to paraphrase Adam Smith, amounted to a conspiracy against the ordinary people whose interests Mr Ridley and Lord Caithness have so much at heart. Ordinary people's opinions are dismissed with contempt by arrogant architects like Richard Rogers, aptly dubbed the Cossack of Coin Street. That was the Cossack's line at the last Palumbo inquiry and it will be the same at this. That is why a modernist like Rogers will support a Postmodernist like Stirling. All architects hang together to persuade the government that "conservation has gone too far" and to return to the balmy days between 1947 and 1967 when architects had a totally free run of our cities — and smashed them up.

This government, more than any, should resist. It should re-introduce bye-laws which can be justified on the purest free-market principles, since they would curtail the current monopoly in design services enjoyed by architects: a monopoly against other professions like surveyors, builders and civil and mechanical engineers; a monopoly against the public. □

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Horror story

Jimmy McGovern, Liverpool

Damn these Scousers. They will insist on voting for Labour councillors and then expecting these councillors to stick to election pledges and then someone has to come along and remove these councillors from office and it's all so, well, troublesome. Far better to deny them all the vote in the first place. It's happening. . .

Three or four months ago a man visited my parents' home (They are both in their seventies and live alone). He asked certain questions: How many people lived there? etc. etc. My mother was apprehensive about answering these questions. She said she wasn't keen to help in any way as regards Mrs Thatcher's poll tax. The man wasn't exactly tactful. He replied that only criminals would refuse to answer his questions. My mother, now joined by my father, said she had never been a criminal, she was unwilling to answer *on principle*. The man then said that my parents could go to prison for refusing to answer. My mother countered that, as far as she was aware, you could go to prison only for refusing to answer an official census form. The man then seemed to run out of argument, told my parents that they wouldn't have a vote at any future election, and left. Three or four months later, on 5 May, my parents went to the polling station to vote Labour. Their names weren't on the electoral register and, for the first time in 51 years, they were denied a vote.

My parents are part of the forgotten generation, a generation that gave years of its life to the defeat of fascism. I think they have a right to ask of us: What manner of man was this who came to their door? What right did he have to move at such lightning speed to deprive them of their votes? What were *his* political leanings? Why did he treat them like dirt? Why did he leave them shaking and uneasy for the rest of that day?

I could say more. I won't. No need — because with the poll tax just around the corner, I think you'll be getting a few more letters like this.

Fruits of war

Stephen Cook, Marlborough, Wilts

Your leader (*NS* 29 April) referred to wars waged for "reputation and glory", an obvious criticism of the Falklands War. One of the main results of that war was the removal from power of an obnoxious dictatorial regime which had murdered over ten thousand of its opponents; surely no form of negotiation would have achieved that most desirable objective.

Benn vs Heffer

Basil Rodgers, Manchester

I was astonished to find an article by a Tory Minister (*NS* 27 April) extolling his party's attitudes towards citizenship and communal values. True, your editorial in the same issue does contest his views, but is it really appropriate to take the Tories on over liberal issues of this kind when Tony Benn and Eric Heffer are fighting for the soul of the Labour Party? I notice you haven't given either of them space. Perhaps there will be time for debates of the kind you are sponsoring, but for the moment you really should be contesting more basic issues of class and equality

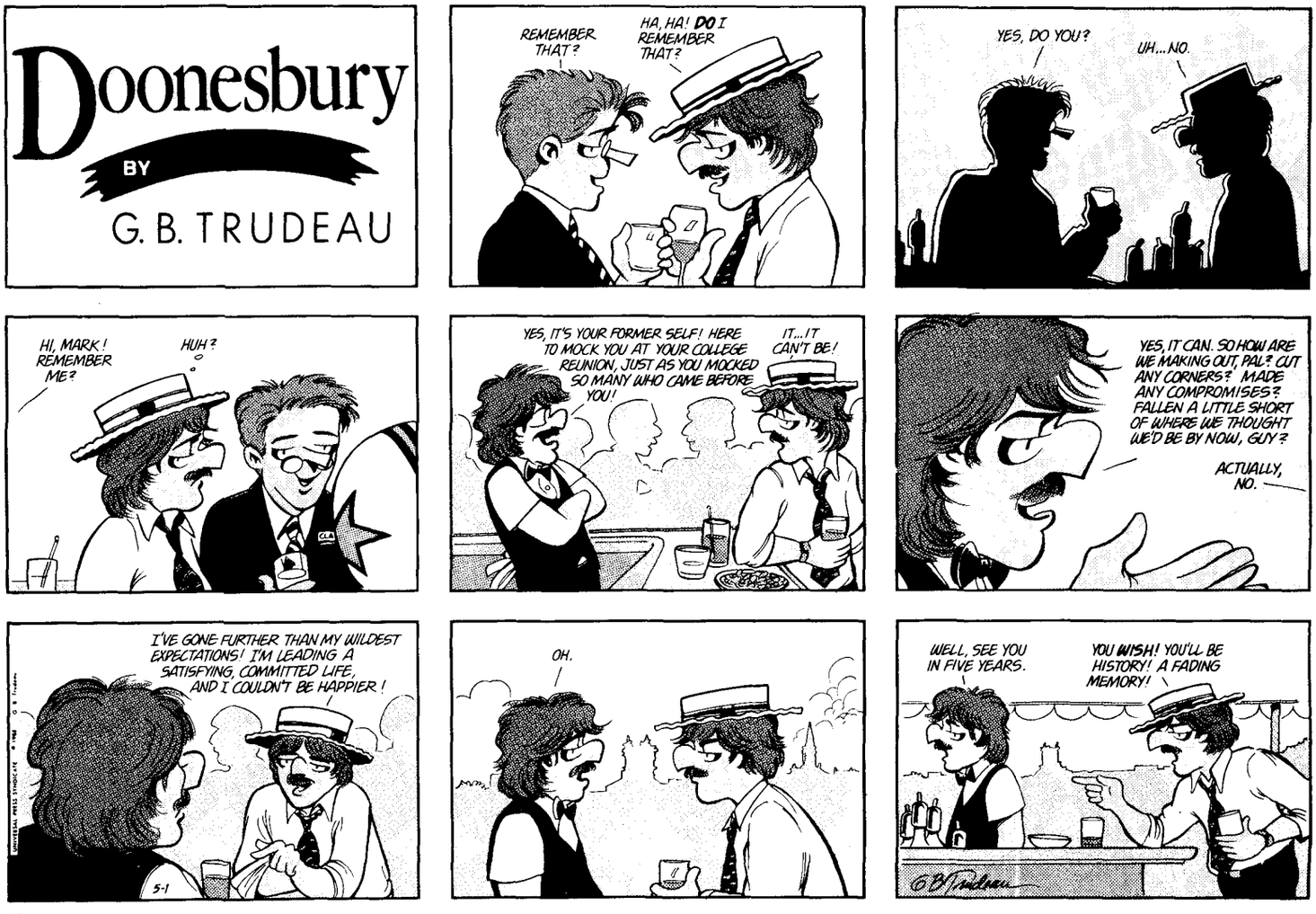
Definitions of love

Mike Campbell, London SW15

Simon Reynolds' pop columns (*NS* passim) are getting ever closer to saying what he means and are becoming almost essential. Good. But after revealing that he remembers what it was like not to be a critic — he had a favourite group! (The Smiths, no less) — he seems to have abandoned the notion of fandom as if ashamed of this momentary weakness.

I suppose it's in the nature of pop writing to be unreasonable (all the best, like Morley and Savage, have been that) but Simon's espousal of the Irresponsibility of the best new pop, its "refusal of maturity", is beginning to sound all too grown up. Much as I love (maybe *admire*) A. R. Kane and Pixies (I really do!), I also love all those hummable tunes which Simon thinks are frozen in some Perfect Pop time-warp — say, recent singles by the Wedding Present and Darling Buds and even The Primitives.

It's the difference between *falling* in love (the sudden, whimsical, silly thrill) and *being* in love (the deeper, more complex sensations); and we wouldn't really want one without the other, now, would we?



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Grossly sexist

Peter Lownds, London W5

I feel that I cannot let Mat Coward's quite appalling piece on the Deputy Leadership contest (*NS* 29 April) pass without comment. Aside from its irrelevancy to serious political discussion it was grossly sexist. I refer of course to a line that such "great" British "comedians" as Benny Hill and Les Dawson would have been proud of — "I'm looking forward to visiting the hospitality room at the next Red Wedge thrash and trying out my new chat-up line: 'Hello darling, I'm deputy leader of the Labour Party. What colour panties are you wearing?'" How on earth can *NS* justify this? For many readers I imagine that it merely reinforced their scepticism over the level of seriousness with which the problem of sexism is treated by the left.

Mat Coward undoubtedly has a long and profitable future to look forward to with the gutter press in Fleet Street where I'm sure that his talents will be in great demand. I hope that the *NS* will not let him drag them with him.

Another New Stateswoman

Hilda M. Snowden, Bradford

Congratulations to Mrs Gwendy Peck on getting her letter published (*NS* 27 April). She states my position exactly; the paper is essentially New States*man*. I have written several letters in the past objecting to various aspects of the *NS*'s tone, but *mine* have never been published.

I wonder how much influence Isabel O'Keeffe (Acting Ass. Ed.) has — or is she just a tea-maker? I notice also there are many other women among the staff. Are they all Thatchers? I, too, continue to be a subscriber — *faute de mieux*!

Urban sprawl

Peter Goodchild, Chair, Northern Parishes Action Group, Warfield, Berks

It is so easy to understand the appeal of Douglas Hurd's notion that the WRVS has worn better than the Webbs, that traditional structures rooted in long-standing traditions of social service can be seen as more effective than the bureaucractic plans drawn up on Fabian principles. It is easy to sympathise with his view that the "strongest loyalties are to family, neighbours and nation" and that the thrust of government should be to shift power "outwards away from the corporalist battalions to the small platoons".

But does Mr Hurd mean the devolution of real power, the planning powers for instance? Perhaps he does, but this government certainly does not. Here in Berkshire we are threatened with 7,000 extra houses which will open the door to the suburbanisation of the whole county. Every level of local opinion, from residents' associations, through parish, district and county have come out against them. And yet they are about to be wished on us by one man, the Secretary of State for the Environment, Nicholas Ridley. He can, and most certainly will, use his total power, embodied in the planning law, to override such deep-rooted objections in favour of market forces. And when the real power is held centrally like this then all Mr Hurd's talk of tenants' co-operatives, housing associations and the like, is just mere tokenism. Such are the myths with which the more liberal Tories protect their sensibilities.

Help wanted please

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AGENDA

Deadline: 2pm Mondays

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PROGRESSIVE LEAGUE at 7.30pm Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, London WC1. Talk by David Templer of the Life Training Movement 'When Love and Sex get Split Apart'. Charge 75p including refreshments. UB40 cards free. The Progressive League caters for mind, body and intellectual stimulus. Ring 01-586 2274 for information.

WED 18 MAY

NORTH-SOUTH INTERDEPENDENCE — An African Viewpoint. "Trade: North-South and other directions". Speaker: Adotey Bing (Economist and Researcher). 6.30 pm. Africa Centre, 38 King Street, Covent Garden, London WC2. 01-836 1973.

MARTIN O'NEILL MP on "Labour's Defence Policy". 7.30 pm, House of Commons Committee Room 6. All welcome. Central London Fabian Society.

WED 18 MAY

THE ACADEMIC INN Dinner Discussion. Speaker Sir Richard Body, MP: "Red or Green Agriculture?". Fields Restaurant, St Martin in the Fields Church, St Martin's Place, WC2. 6.30 pm. Tickets £15 at door. 01-286 4366.

FRI 20 MAY

SHAW SOCIETY. Benny Green on 'Edith Nesbit and the Fabians she loved'. Conway Hall, Red Lion Square, Holborn. Coffee 6.30 p.m. Meeting 7 p.m.

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Application forms obtainable from the Borough Personnel Officer, Ealing Civic Centre, 14-16 Uxbridge Road, London W5 2HL. Tel: 01-840 1995. Please quote appropriate reference.

Ealing's new Council welcomes applications from all regardless of sex, race, ethnic origin, responsibility for dependants, from people with disabilities and from lesbians and gay men.

Ealing

NUCPS

THE NATIONAL UNION OF CIVIL & PUBLIC SERVANTS

JOURNALIST

The National Union of Civil & Public Servants needs another Journalist to work on its monthly newspaper covering individual membership issues and matters of general interest to the union; also, a new fortnightly steward's bulletin. The work includes news reporting and some feature writing and subbing. The National Union is an expanding 115,000 strong Union formed this year by the merger of the Society of Civil & Public Servants and the Civil Service Union. We organise staff in a wide range of grades and occupations throughout the Civil Service and Public Bodies. The successful candidate will be expected to demonstrate a combination of journalistic skills and a commitment to progressive trade union principles.

The salary (currently under review) will commence at **£11,695** rising by annual increments to **£13,975**, plus Inner London Weighting of **£1,527** per annum. The annual leave allowance is 30 days.

Applications should be sent to the **General Secretary, NUCPS, 124/130 Southwark Street, London SE1 0TU** to arrive no later than **31 May 1988**. Please enclose full CV, including details of education, employment, trade union activity and experience in journalism. Please give a daytime telephone number. Interviews for shortlisted candidates will take place on **16 June 1988.**

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Closing date: 27th May 1988.

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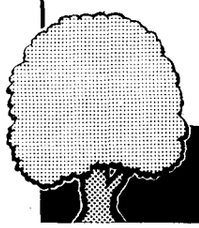

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Weekend competition

No 3025 **Set by E. O. Parrott**

Many nursery rhymes had their origins in historical events ("Ring a Ring o' Roses" and the Black Death, for instance). Could we please have new nursery rhymes, based on more recent happenings? Max. three per entrant, by 25 May.

No 3022 **Set by Morgan le Fay**

Incantations of revenge on Geoffrey Dickens MP — for summoning press attention (yet again) by pronouncing his intention to rid the world of *witches*.

Report **By Babe Bio**

Sisters and bruthers: it's worked!
Geoffrey D hasnt uttered for weaks
(I've not felt so upwerdly perked
Since Clive Ponting got off with his leaks).
A few of your chants were unprinterble
But orl were qwite *wickedly* vile:
Even somwun not userly hintable
Wood have cotterned on after a wile.
Geoff shood know now that, if he abbuses us,
We shall make prity sertain his jaw locks,
'Cos witches . . . well *nobody* uses us . . .
And warlocks do *not* tuch their forelocks.

Witchcraft and wizardry sweeping the land?
The demon hyperbole hasn't been banned!
For two pins I'd leap on my broomstick tonight
And zoom in on Geoffrey to zap him with fright.
But new brooms sweep cleanest and mine's an antique,
So why waste a good spell on such a fat freak?
I've settled instead for this Michelin shape
In puke-coloured plasticine, mouth agape —
There's quite a resemblance! Gimme those pins!
Why Geoffrey, you're sweating for all your sins!
Remote acupuncture commences now:
Nobody's going to be holier-than-thou!

MARGARET MCKNIGHT

That all the harmless mumbling dames
Who ever died consumed in flames
With their last dreadful screams
Oppress your dreams.

That nagging aches and tearing pain
In tooth and ballock, guts and brain
Vex through my eldritch powers
Your waking hours.

That all the spiteful words you've said
Din round your stupid callous head
Throughout your stay in hell.
Such is my spell.

GERARD BENSON

Dickens, Dickens, in the House
Brain of bat and heart of louse.
May your screaming from the right
Lead you to eternal night.
'Ere you reach the Other Place
May you stumble, seize the Mace,
Bring it crashing to the ground,
Tories baying all around
Calling forth the Speaker's curse
Naming you a boozer. Worse,
Cause you, fallen, to incur
A really dirty look from Her.

JOHN SWEETMAN

Cold your chips, warm your beer;
Undone your zips when Royals are near;
Piles on your bum, boils on your prick;
And when you come you'll come too quick!

Clapped-out wheels, burgled pad;
Market deals turning bad;
Young ones jeering as you pass;
Old ones sneering at your arse!

Reporters ringing, night and day;
Old foes singing, papers pay;
The Chief Whip calls, you lick his boots;
He kicks your balls — and Maggie hoots!

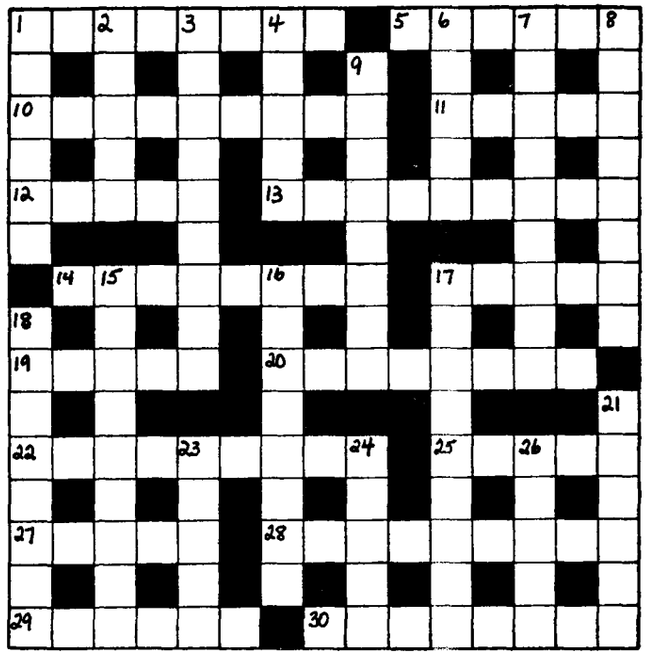
MAY DAY

May your sleeping hours be cursed
With the hellish legions' worst:
Perverts, pinkoes, doubters, knockers,
Rebels, misfits, thinkers, mockers,
Freaks who favour foreign food,
Cranks who slumber in the nude,
Fops in shirts of non-white hues,
Rank degenerates in suede shoes.
May the nancy poets taunt thee;
May the pansy vicars haunt thee.
Geoffrey Dickens, Geoffrey Dickens,
Fire burns and cauldron thickens.

NOEL PETTY

Weekend Crossword 1594

PRIZES: £5 Book Tokens for the first three correct solutions opened. Entries to Crossword 1594, New Statesman, Foundation House, Perseverance Works, 38 Kingsland Road, London E2 8DQ by first post 24 May.



Name_____

Address_____

_____

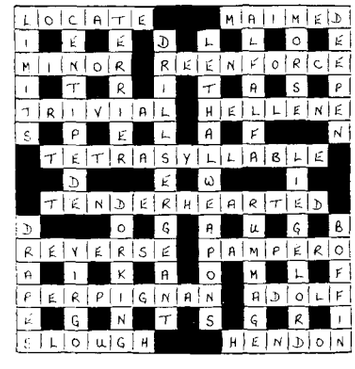
1. Seniors make points during sets (8)
5. Most of the stream gives one a sensation (6)
10. Foreign money in oriental country (9)
11. Send nothing unusual when detected (5)
12. Organisation which puts one in the lead at court? (5)
13. One who counts on the dull returning when it should be fine (9)
14. Mineral served in poet's pub? (8)
17. Sharp sensation which goes right inside a tool (5)
19. Sufficient to make the French follow an English politician (5)
20. Being obsessive, go fishing with an artist in a river (8)
22. No pitches have to be prepared for this subject (9)
25. I catch about a point in a small figure (5)
27. Novelist who used backward-looking material (5)
28. Pleased to pelt a politician (9)
29. Fierce ones see little gravity in rows (6)
30. The superficial make their way through without the benevolent (8)

DOWN

1. Like a window and you can see a girl in it (6)
2. Is expected to be part of a rough tough world (5)
3. Money for almost new writer in French town (9)
4. I enter the carriage as a king (5)
6. Oriental engaged in English industrial enterprise (5)
7. In mixed company man is wide awake (9)
8. Bookmaker makes a young man penniless (8)
9. A policeman is needed to disperse danger ahead of me (8)
15. Getting better although there is a devil wandering about (9)
16. Show disapproval of college with reservations (8)
17. Politician who would have to sacrifice his relations to become a member of the church (9)
18. A converted papist he is most contented (8)
21. An actress having a great inclination to embrace a redhead (6)
23. Listener includes note for consumer (5)
24. Vessel used for punishment (5)
26. Politician who is tided over? (5)

SETSQUARE

Solution to 1592



Prizewinners to 1592

Derek Cox (Beeston, Nottingham)
Clive Brightley (Reading)
M.M. Bishop (Brussels, Belgium)

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Chess

SPASSKY'S renaissance at the Plaza International in New Zealand had so much of the good old days about it that he even revisited the King's Gambit. Yet perhaps this does not deserve to be thought of as the weapon of a swash-buckling adventurer. The chosen opponent, though the eldest of the three amazing Polgar sisters, is still only an 18-year old girl. Come on, Boris, we dare you to play it in the *grand prix* against GMs of your own size.

Spassky-Zsuzsa Polgar, Wellington 1988. King's Gambit.

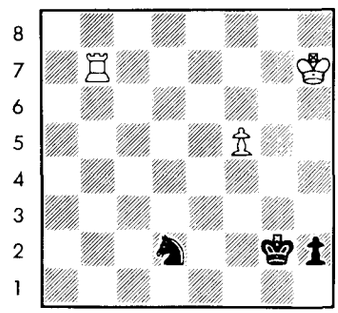
1. e4 e5 2. f4 d5 There is nothing wrong with the line Polgar plays, but of course the old principle still holds good: the only way to refute a gambit is by accepting it. Back at Mar del Plata 1960 what Fischer played against Spassky was 3 ... g5 4. h4 g4 5. Ne5 Nf6 6. d4 d6 7. Nd3 Nxe4 8. Bxf4 Bg7 9. Nc3? Nxe3 10. bxc3 c5 and Black was objectively better, though it was Spassky who won the game in the end. Theory has moved on since then. For example, White can improve with 9. c3 Qe7 10. Qe2 with full compensation for a pawn, as Black's backward f-pawn is hardly an asset. **3. exd5 c6 4. Nc3 exf4 5. Nf3 Bd6 6. d4 Ne7 7. dxc6 Nbxc6 8. d5 Nb4 9. Bc4 Bf5 10. Bb3** White has more centre pawns, Black has free and rapid development. After the game Spassky said that 10 ... Qb6 was the possibility he was most worried about. **0-0 11. 0-0 Bg4 12. Ne4 Nf5 13. c3 Na6 14. Bc2 Bc7** A retreat that turns into a rout. However, against the more optimistic try 14 ... Nh4 Spassky had prepared 15. Qd3. The tournament bulletins give the sample variation 15 ... f5 16. Nxd6 Bxf3 17. gxf3 Qg5+ (or 17 ... Qxd6 18. Kh1!) 18. Kf2 Qg2+ 19. Ke1 Rae8+ 20. Nxe8 Rxe8+ 21. Kd1 and Black's attack runs out of power. **15. Nf2 Bxf3 16. Qxf3 Ne3 17. Bxe3 fxe3 18. Ng4 Qg5 19. Rae1 Rae8 20. Kh1 e2 21. Rxe2 Rxe2 22. Qxe2 Qxd5** Thus Polgar avoids the loss of a pawn. But White's light-squared Bishop is enhanced and f7, the traditional target of King's Gambiteers, comes under fire. **23. Bb3 Qd7 24. Ne5 Bxe5 25. Qxe5 Nc7 26. h3 Qc8?** For better or worse, 26 ... Ne6 had to be tried. Now Spassky wins the f7 pawn, and the rest is plain sailing. **27. Qe7 Kh8 28. Rxf7 Rxf7 29. Bxf7 b6 30. b4 a5 31. b5 h6 32. a4 Na8 33. Be6 Qb8 34. Bd5 Nc7 35. Bc6 Qc8 36. c4 Na8 37. Qb7 Qxb7 38. Bxb7 Nc7 39. c5! bxc5 40. b6 Ne6 41. Bd5 Nf8 42. Bc6 1-0.**

Murray Chandler's status in New Zealand is naturally special. He left as a boy with a crazy ambition, nowadays he returns as a grandmaster with a world-wide reputation. In this tournament he scored just as many points as Spassky, but in very different style, quite out of touch and always scrambling. In this game he gave another young New Zealander a bit too much encouragement:

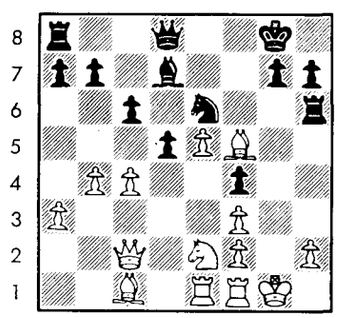
Chandler-Dive, Wellington 1988. Petroff's Defence.

1. e4 e5 2. Nf3 Nf6 I have some sympathy with the view that the Petroff, with its strong tendency to dull symmetry, should be banned. It's a most annoying defence to face as White when Black is happy with a draw and you are not. **3. Nxe5 d6 4. Nf3 Nxe4 5. d4 d5 6. Bd3 Bd6 7. 0-0 0-0 8. c4 c6 9. Qc2 f5 10. Nc3 Na6 11. a3 Nc7 12. Ne2 Ne6 13. b4 Bd7 14. Bb2 Rf6 15. Rae1?** A very careless move by the GM. He casually smothers his own King when Black already has the makings of a K-side attack. **Rh6** Threatening to eliminate the defender of h2 by moving a Knight to g5. **16. Bc1 N4g5 17. Ne5 Bxe5 18. dxe5 Nf3+! 19. gxf3 f4 20. Bf5** *See diagram.* **Nd4??** Such a wild misconception. Chandler could hardly have survived after the straightforward 20 ... Qg5+ 21. Kh1 Qh5! 22. h3 Ng5, or 20 ... Qg5+ 21. Bg4 Nd4 22. Nxd4 Bxg4. **21. Nxd4 Qg5+ 22. Kh1 Rxh2+ 23. Kxh2 Qh4+ 24. Kg1 Qg5+ 25. Bg4 Bxg4** If White just recaptures on g4 Black will at least score a draw by perpetual check. But the refutation is quite simple. **26. Bxf4 Qxf4 27. Ne2 Qxf3 28. Qc3 Qf5 29. Ng3** and Black, with nothing to show for his defecit of a Rook, resigned a few moves later.

In this position White is to play and draw, in spite of the Black pawn on the brink of becoming one of those great ladies with a tiara on top. If you find the solution, don't tell me. Instead send it in to the composer, Paul Lamford (Editor of *Chess*, Railway Road, Sutton Coldfield, B73 6AZ). A book prize is offered for the first solution to be opened on 28 May.



Chandler-Dive: after White's 20th



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This England

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☐ Troubles. English major Ian Charleson in Ireland after World War I to find both his fiancee and peace. But "The Troubles" intrude even then. First part of serial. — *Independent* (Jane Banks)

☐ A Woman driver snapped up what she thought was a discarded microwave oven lying at the roadside — and ended up being chased by the police. The cooker lookalike, they told her, was actually their radar speed trap. — *Western Morning News* (A. Andrews)

☐ The cardiac wing officially opened by Mrs Thatcher last week at the Hospital for Sick Children, Great Ormond Street, was already closed by the time she performed the ceremony, it was revealed last night. — *Observer* (Janet Mearns)

☐ Lost motorists waste about £200 million a year driving on roads which they need never use in the first place, according to a confidential report on road signs which is being prepared for the Department of Transport. While many do not know where they are going, the main problem is that most of them do not know where they are. — *The Times* (Leonard Cox)

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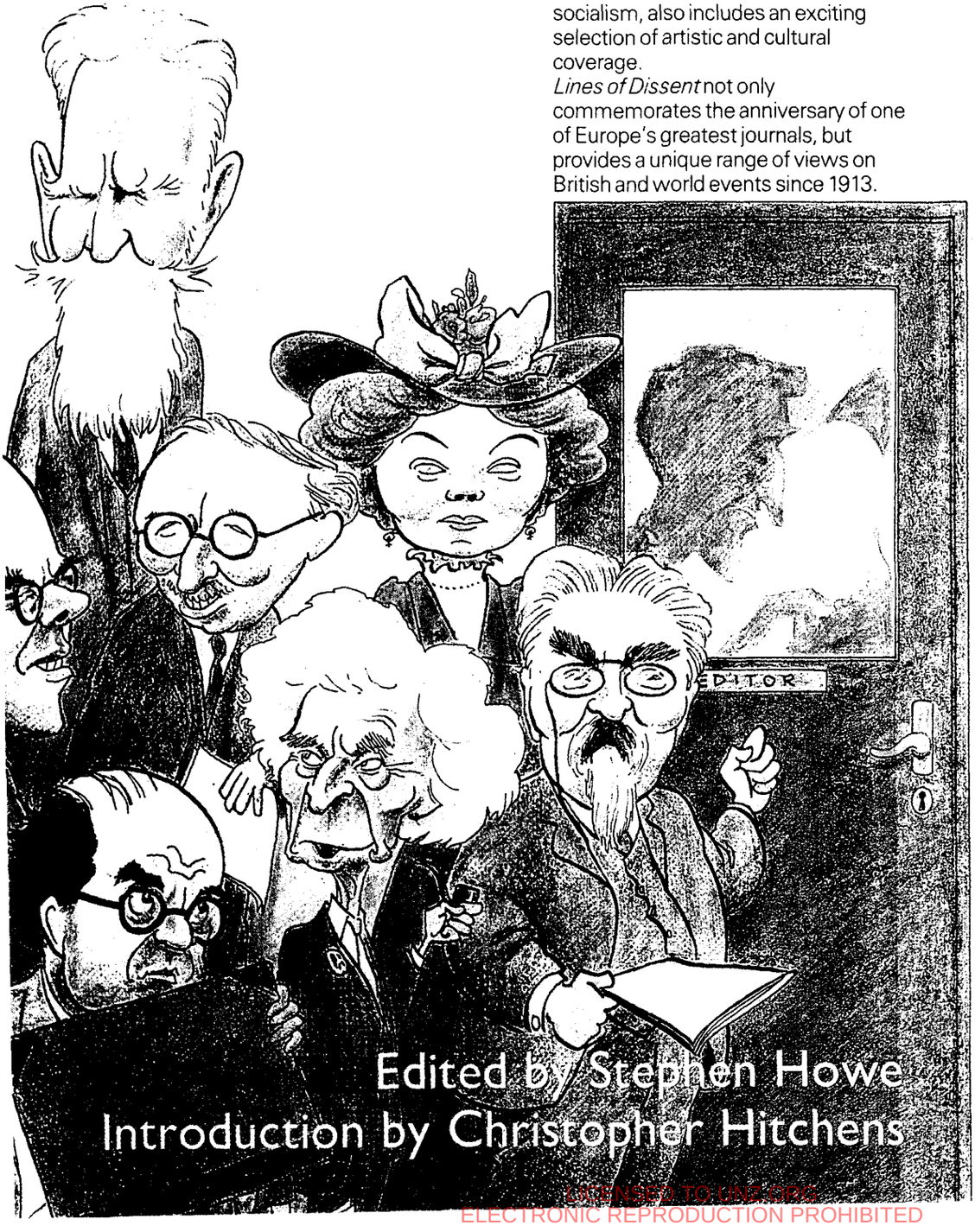

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